

**The Influence of Teacher Media Images on  
Professional Teacher Identities**

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## Declaration

I, Davina Kirby confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

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## ABSTRACT

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This study is a life history exploration into teachers' responses to representations of teachers in media (television, film and reality documentaries), and the influence media have on the construction of professional teacher identities including teachers' relationships with their students as part of their daily practice. Few studies have been carried out from the perspective of British teachers using narrative research methods. This research uniquely addresses teachers' reactions to the reality documentaries that have recently emerged based on teachers and schools, many of which have been located in the UK. The research was conducted in my own school, a girls' comprehensive secondary school in London, with a mixed sixth form from 2012 to 2014. 17 teachers were interviewed in depth, twice each, concluding with 7 of them for focus group interviews. The research showed that teachers reflect on their professional identity using teacher images in media as a stimulus in their narratives. The research demonstrated evidence of teachers developing their narratives from the start to the end, and some sticking to scripted, although rich, narratives throughout the research. Other sides to professional teacher identities also emerged including the performing nature necessary to be a teacher. Professional teacher identity, as well as pedagogy and practice, were heavily influenced by their teacher-student relationships, and it was the teacher-student relationships that were commonly noted in film, TV and reality documentaries. Teachers were able to recognise various teacher images in media, but some emotional responses surfaced, especially from teachers in the process of resigning from the school. Finally, in this study, the images that resonate in teachers' minds do not include images from previous generations, thus teachers are much less conscious of the heritage of teacher images in media.

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## 1. Introduction

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### A summary of the research

This thesis concerns a life history exploration into teachers' responses to fictional representations of their profession in media, and the influence media have on their professional teacher identity including their relationships with their students as part of their daily practice. The research used two in-depth interviews with 17 of my colleagues, finally ending up with 7 colleagues for my focus group interviews. The research was conducted from 2012 to 2014 in a girls' comprehensive secondary school in London with approximately 1200 students. The school also has a mixed sixth form in partnership with the local boys' comprehensive school since 2010. The students that attend this school are multicultural and multi-religious. This particular school, as mentioned is a girls' comprehensive school, which was a grammar school in 1924 where girls studied from the age of 14 following a two-year course in business studies and general subjects. In order to put this form of schooling into context, it was by the 1950s that the importance of women's dual roles was recognised, that is being able to balance work with home life and by the 1960s, girls attended single sex grammar schools, but these were the middle class girls rather than the working class (Goodman, 2010). In the present day, the school teaches a multitude of subjects for all students aged 11 to 19. It was made a specialist Arts school focusing therefore not only on academic subjects but also performing arts subjects, production and management.

### Aims and Rationale

My research explored teachers' professional identity with a focus on the way teachers are and have been represented in media, and the extent to which these representations may influence teachers' professional identity and pedagogical practices, and teacher-student relationships. The research aimed to find out the opinions teachers have about fictional representations of teachers in media. I also proposed to examine how media representations might affect teacher pedagogy and practice. It

later transpired that teacher-student relationships, as part of teachers' pedagogy and practice, did cross over from media to the stories of these teachers.

The research was based in one school, but was not specifically about the school but the personal stories from each individual teacher. It is not intended for the findings of this study to represent the school as a case. Hence, this research is not about the school but about the teachers. The rationale for not calling my research a case study is discussed in more depth in my methodology section. For the purpose of my research, the individual stories are treated as unique and separate from one another. The teachers' lives and experiences are likely to be documented across different schools, although these teachers happen to all work in the same school during the time that the research was conducted. This research is regarded as life-history research using narrative methods.

My interests as a researcher focused on using the stories of teachers to explore how media is used as a vehicle for teachers to construct and reconstruct their professional teacher identity and pedagogy and practice. From an educational background with a primary focus on quantitative data, facts and evidence in a science-related field, my research allowed me to explore another skillset in the field of social sciences, specifically the stories teachers live through, and tell. Gilbert's opening message: 'we live in stories, not statistics' (2002:223) fitted well into my reasons for carrying out research of a qualitative nature rather than a quantitative one. A quantitative study would not have reflected the messages within the stories teachers had to share during their interviews. Although it is fine to summarise the data, not representing the qualitative side of the data would not justify the findings I will later convey in my Findings and Discussion chapter.

Teachers and educators need to know how others see them through the media for their own professional identity (Foff & Grambs, 1956). Films and sitcoms on television reach a wider audience than scholarly articles and so there is potential to reveal the inner life of a teacher through popular media with a depth and emotion that is usually missing from quantitative sociological studies which



justifies my choice to carry out narrative research. Media therefore have relevance for teachers at any stage in their professional lives because they can enhance understanding of an individual's practice and school context. For this reason, I used teachers from a range of different stages and roles, and responsibilities in my research.

### Researcher's Biography

I have been a teacher of Science since 2006, and in charge of Key Stage 4 sciences, and Key Stage 5 Biology. I now work as an Associate SLT (senior leadership team) member for my school, which involves leading the PGCE and NQT (newly qualified teacher) programme, as well as being part of the Teaching and Learning Leaders Group. I have previously worked as an AST (Advanced Skills Teacher) for Science supporting other Secondary schools in the London Borough of Merton in addition to teaching Science in the school where I am employed.

Throughout my teaching career, I have become more acutely aware of public perceptions, or misperceptions, of teachers' images, particularly amongst my circle of friends and family. Questioning where their opinions come from, one view would be that we have all had an education so we have all had the experience of being exposed to teachers in our lives and for any experience, we forge ideas and opinions. However, with teaching, these ideas and opinions may not stem from our memories alone; they may resurface repeatedly based on images of teachers in sitcoms or the news on television (TV), whether it be in films, or newspapers, books and magazines. I was particularly interested in the fictional representation of teachers, as throughout my lifetime alone, I have noticed that this image of teachers has changed and the teachers on TV in the 1980s were very different from the ones portrayed currently. I wondered why this was, and one could have carried out research trawling through the archives mapping out these changes, but I did not feel that such a mapping task would be as revealing without the thoughts and opinions of actual teachers. I have always been interested in people's stories, feelings and opinions, which is possibly a reason I am the type of teacher I am today. My lessons will regularly draw on students' stories, and I cannot teach a topic without being aware of

students' opinions of, for instance, challenges they face during a topic or their prior knowledge relating to the topic. Opinions and stories therefore matter to me and are crucial in my area of research. It only seemed fitting for my research methods therefore, to involve teachers conversing with me and with each other by the completion of my research. I wanted the research to involve teachers sharing their stories and opinions about images of teachers in media. I wanted to find out if these images had any influence on their professional teacher identity, pedagogy and practice, and on their relationships with their students. What emerged was a set of some very strong opinions about how teachers are represented in fictional media, with some emotional rather than rational responses.

Films and television have a long tradition of taking school life and teachers as subjects for their stories. The representations of teachers in British film and television have echoed the changing times usually due to political shifts and changes to education at the time (Ellsmore, 2005). I wondered whether teacher representations might influence teachers' sense of educational experiences and how a teacher should act and behave. Now with nine years of experience in teaching, I have started to see the flaws in these representations and, in my opinion, the unrealistic nature of the setting in which these fictional teachers were teaching. I have therefore thought about these teacher representations, whether I may consciously try to avoid being like the teachers I have watched on TV, or whether to illuminate the qualities that I perceive essential for a teacher to have. Growing up in the 1990s, there were endless American sitcoms on Channel 4, which I watched before my father came home in time for the Channel 4 News. I remember watching *Boy Meets World* (ABC: 1993-2000), and Mr Sweeney always stood out to me as a stern but fair teacher. I could consider this particular teacher character as a role model in terms of my own teaching pedagogy and practice. He had a good relationship with his students, but his students knew where to draw the line. I would like to think that these are the characteristics I have when I am teaching in the classroom. I am sure I have been exposed to many fictional teachers but only certain characters resonate in my mind. This could be because that representation is one I would associate with my own professional teacher identity. However, the life of the fictional teacher can often seem uncomplicated compared to teachers working in reality, and

media can often represent teachers as only having one major obstacle in a week whereas in school we are juggling many tasks at once. They may be some individuals who may feel that the presentation of fictional teachers and their stories have become formulaic, and representations of teachers more true to life may not necessarily be portrayed in popular culture. This tension may be the reason why the fly-on-the-wall documentary *Educating Essex* (Channel 4, 2011) was a success where real teachers were filmed in a comprehensive school. There have been more programmes similar to this since then, including the Teach First documentary, *Tough Young Teachers* (BBC Three: 2014). However, some clever editing could mean that even a show as close to reality is still not completely true to life.

There is very little research about representations of teachers in the media, and its impact on teacher identity, or teacher-student relationships as part of their daily practice, and hardly any focusing on the media in the UK, or research carried out in the UK. The images of teachers can merge into media representations of teachers which have been documented by researchers such as Buckingham (1987), Weber and Mitchell (1995), Warburton and Saunders (1996) and Ellsmore (2005). I will be engaging critically with these studies in my theoretical framework. It is relatively easy to find websites containing teachers in popular culture. A quick Google search found me on a website highlighting 'The 20 best teachers from popular culture'. This website is not particularly well-known to me but as my search continued, I found similar lists of teachers in popular culture portrayed in films on *Wikipedia*. However, it is difficult to locate literature where teachers are giving their opinions on how teachers are portrayed in media, and how this influences their professional teacher identity.

### Key Research Texts

The following outline the key research text that have influenced my research. Each text will be engaged with more critically in the Literature Review, but it is important to highlight where this research stemmed from in these early chapters.

The key research texts include **Weber and Mitchell's** research in **1995**, which predominantly concentrated on examples of teachers from American media to explore identity. British examples were not represented in their work, however. **Ellsmore** (2005), on the other hand, explored British

representations of teachers, but mainly comedies and sitcoms. This research attempted to explore another dimension of media to include the impact on teachers' identities based on newspapers, podcasts, and TV, film, radio and social media. Later, **Mitchell and Weber (1999)** describe a 'cumulative cultural text of teaching' (1999:166) with media in mind. In stating this, both authors were implying that teaching is accounted for beyond the scholarly texts and could contribute to teachers' pedagogical practice. I argue that this ever-growing cultural undertone of teaching in media has influenced teachers and their professional identity. Along with Mitchell and Weber, **Fisher et al. (2008)** argued that images of teachers in media play a role in the construction of teacher identity. **Buckingham (1987:1)** classified identity as an 'ambiguous and slippery' term but unique to each of us. He later discussed that 'the formation of identity often involves a process of stereotyping or "cognitive simplification" that allows people to distinguish easily between self and others, and to define themselves and their group in positive ways' (Buckingham, 2008:6). Buckingham's research, although focused on the effects of media on the identity of teenagers, could be adapted to answering my research questions as it is not only students who are exposed to and influenced by media, but teachers also. In contrast to Buckingham's 'fluid' characteristics of identity, teacher images in media described as 'elite' (a superior teacher in terms of ability in a group or society) or 'traditional' (teacher-centered methods focused on rote learning and memorization) were regarded as images that would not fade in the eye of the public. **Judge (1995)** claimed that teachers would continue to be influenced by elite or traditional educators, and these images would remain resilient in the eyes of educators. Judge described these images as dominant and powerful in the public imagination. These images would surely be placed in a pedagogical museum to be referred to by educators throughout the years. As the exploration of teachers' identities were through narratives, there were also key research texts that inspired this element of this research. **Goodson (1992)**, for instance, recognised we live in the 'age of narrative'. Thus, the characteristics of life history research and narrative inquiry were suited to explore my research questions as 'life stories of teachers build up with a broader social history of teaching...one which is sensitive to their individual lives and experiences' (**Goodson and Sikes,**

**2001:24**). Furthermore, life history research and narrative inquiry offer ‘better theoretical linkages between individual agency and social structure’ (**MacLure, 1993:312**). This leads me onto my research questions.

### Research Questions

#### **1. How do teachers interpret fictional representations of teachers in the media?**

I want to find out teachers’ perceptions of how they are represented on the television, in film and reality documentaries. However, other forms of media may emerge, and these examples will not be ignored, such as in newspapers, magazines, books, and radio. It will be interesting to find out teachers’ opinions of these representations and how teachers reflect back to their own professional teacher identity which leads onto research question 2.

#### **2. How might teachers use media images of teachers as a vehicle in the construction of their professional teacher identities?**

I want to find out how media representations of teachers might be used in the construction and reconstruction of teachers’ professional identity through their narratives. It will be interesting to unravel what components of their professional teacher identity might surface as a result of reflecting upon these media images of teachers.

#### **3. How do media depictions of teachers’ relationships with students affect the construction of teachers’ professional identity, pedagogy and practice?**

I want to explore whether media have an influence or might act as a stimulus for teachers to discuss their relationships with students in relation to their professional identities, pedagogy and practice. This may be a significant part of this research as teaching focuses on student progression, planning lessons, including an ever-increasing focus on student-led lessons and personalised learning.

## Thesis Structure

The thesis is organised into eight chapters. In this chapter I have introduced my research, research questions, and also absences in which my research could make a contribution.

Following this introduction Chapter 2 focuses on my theoretical framework underpinning this research, presenting theories based on the research I have read, and my theoretical assumptions, including strengths and weaknesses of past and current research into similar areas of study. I will argue my own theories in terms of teachers' professional identity and the influence media has on it.

Chapter 3 is the Literature Review, which will elaborate on the literature which underpins my research whilst identifying research which has worked as a springboard for my research whereby gaps in the literature will be identified. It will describe theories on identity, professional identity and media linked to identity.

Following this, Chapter 4 (The Methodology) will focus on the design of the study and theories connected to narrative research. The school setting and sample will also be explained. Methods of analysis will also be discussed. Codes, themes and family codes (apriori and post-priori) will also be outlined. Issues concerning insider research and ethical implications linked to my research will also be discussed. I will justify my methods which involved timelines, individual interviews/conversations and a focus group interview.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 will be my Findings and Discussion structured firstly around the teachers' narratives, the focus group discussion, and finally the explanations of emerging patterns in the data.

Finally, in Chapter 8, I will outline my conclusions, and possible contributions from this thesis to the wider research community as well as limitations of this research.

The chapter that follows is my theoretical framework outlining where my research is linked in relation to theories of social and personal construction, and agency.

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## 2. Theoretical Framework

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In the previous chapter, I outlined the key works of research I have used as starting points for my research. These included Weber and Mitchell's research in 1995, which used examples of teachers from American media, and Buckingham's research (2008), which focused on the effects of media on the identity of the younger generation. In terms of narrative research, Goodson (1992) and Goodson et al. (2013) has influenced my use of narratives as well as his work with Sikes (2001) in their exploration of teachers' identities where they discuss how teachers talk about their lives to make sense of what has happened to them, therefore giving them a sense of control and agency. I have also drawn ideas from MacLure (1993) offering that narrative inquiry creates 'better theoretical linkages between individual agency and social structure'.

In this section, I will explain my **theoretical and empirical framework**, which includes concepts of narrative construction and agency. I will then outline general **theories of identity, professional teacher identity** following by how media has explored different forms of **teacher images from the 1950s until now**. I will finally explain **professional teacher identity and media in relation to my research**, and where my research is positioned.

### Theoretical and Empirical Framework

My theoretical field includes areas of academic and professional knowledge, and research which contains my general areas of interest: professional teacher identity and popular media. My empirical field includes the general area of practice which I have made my claims. This involves a selection of a region of this field as a localised empirical setting of one particular secondary school in London. Below I outline my empirical and theoretical framework making a distinction between both areas which may relate to one another. In the sections prior to this, I have highlighted key pieces of work from a more general context and critiqued research which underpins my own. This section also included

formulating precise research questions. The outline of my framework is as follows (using ideas from Brown and Dowling, 1998):

#### **My Theoretical field**

- Social and personal constructions of identity → professional teacher identity

**This leads to:**

#### **My Empirical field**

- Education → secondary school teachers → teachers in one school
- Media → fictional media → popular media → TV dramas, films, reality documentaries

**Figure 1: outline of theoretical framework**

Thus my research looks into how the professional teacher identity of teachers in one school is shaped by TV dramas, films, and reality documentaries. As mentioned in my introduction, I will not be using TV news, newspapers, magazines or books, although they may arise in the teachers' narratives.

I am arguing that a professional teacher identity is a socially constructed entity, but also contains elements of individual construction also. I am also arguing that teachers construct and reconstruct their professional identities while they are reflecting on and analysing media representations of teachers. I will first address aspects of social construction in relation to my research followed by the concept of agency.

Social constructionism is a theory of knowledge that examines the development of jointly constructed understandings of the world. Notions of professional teacher identity represent attempts by society to construct specific branches of professional teacher identities and teachers themselves construct their own professional teacher identity through means of socialisation (Goodson et al., 2013). However, this is only one aspect. A distinction between a social and a personal identity evolved



from the work of Mead (1934), resulting in a self (the 'me'), which is a sociological component, and the more personal component (the 'I'), and it is the environment (external factors) that influence Mead's notion of the developing self. The term identity can become a network of many identities depending on the assumption of the role people were expected to play. Mead's 'I' and 'me' also distinguish between two forms of identity, with the 'me' being a self that is bound and structured whereas 'I' associates with a self which is fluid and creative. These are both, according to Mead, socially constructed highlighting the importance of everyday encounters with people. People form a sense of themselves (identities) in relation to the way they may inhabit roles or positions.

Identity formation can be argued as being constructed by the understanding of society. In the case of my research, the aspect of society focused on is popular media. Identity can be socially constructed by understanding the world around oneself and the self as a personal property of the individual who constructs their identity to an audience. This understanding may be embedded in values and structures of society. Knowing these values and structures allows the individual to be reflexive and able to manage one's image, or identity, they choose to present in a public arena (Goffman, 1959). My research will involve identity as a narrative presented to me as the researcher in the stories teachers share with me. Understanding narratives enables the individual to make sense of the social world as well as their own identity which would be constructed against a social backdrop.

The narratives which I explored were constructed, to varying degrees both socially and personally/ on an individual basis. The social construction of narratives views personal narratives as situated performances (Thorne, 2006). Gergen (1991) believes that people will tell and enact different versions of their stories in a social setting, which can vary each time their stories are shared. From this point of view, stories can be constructed, re-constructed and deconstructed. I have recently been sharing stories with others about my pregnancy at work (a school). The story does have versions depending on the person I am sharing the story with (female vs. male; mother vs. non-mother; anxious

pregnant colleague vs. calm pregnant colleague thus shifting dynamics in the storytelling). The story is indeed personal to me and unique in its construction, but is also socially constructed.

Conversational stories of personal experience are an important site for the social construction of self. The personal storytelling may be widely practiced. Bruner (1986) suggests that stories are one of the first cultural constraints on the nature of the self and self-construction. Thus storytelling itself, is an important part in socialisation. This will depend on the social contexts for which the individual is part of, therefore making the narrative a local one rather than universal. Stories or narratives will therefore have a very unique quality in terms of the degree of emphasis an individual places on telling their story both in the social context and the personal context.

Goodson's work on *Developing Narrative Theory* (2013), considers the social context as an important facet of story-telling. When social conditions are constantly shifting, there should be a means by which people manage their lives, and story-telling is one method by which this is achieved. Cushman (1990) describes how society can impact on the individual resulting in narratives altering in shape. Thus, in the search for individualism, one's narrative is a product of society's influence and changes. Change in a social context offers the individual opportunities to author and narrate their own narratives and partake in social action. The action is demonstrated as the person rehearsing and recounting their stories. As Goodson (2013) describes:

Life stories...are intimately connected to cultural locations, to social position and even social privilege as well as to historical periods, which provide different opportunities for the construction and expression of selfhood.

Goodson (2013:25)

This points to Goodson's 'internal affairs' and 'external relations' as 'the self and the narrative are always produced in interaction with the cultural context'.

Therefore, there is an importance in analysing the wider social structures of a narrative to appreciate the personal narrative. Andrews (1991) claims that ignoring the social context would deprive us of understanding the narratives more completely. Bageant (2007:9) also highlights that social construction in narratives is inevitable as people do not 'cite real facts, they recite what they have absorbed from the atmosphere'. Bageant is directing us to the idea that narratives are socially scripted. However, there are varying degrees of how personal the narratives can be so one cannot solely state that the construction of a narrative is social alone. People may be given a script (socially-based) during their youth which they accept without question at the time, but individuals are likely to move between these scripts, emphasising the fluidity of narratives, thus indicating the fluidity in identity construction and reconstruction. Narratives can therefore be 'socially patterned' but are always 'personally inscribed' (Goodson et al., 2013). Understanding the social construction of narratives means the personal construction of narratives can also be understood, and vice-versa.

It can be a challenge to unpick the social construction involved in narratives as the narrator of a story will often neglect the structural context, and often the stories can be biased focusing on the personal element of the narrative. Denzin's (1989) study on alcoholics, highlights this very well whereby narrators exude pride in their achievements to overcome alcoholism, but when close friends were exposed to their narrative accounts, there was a question mark over how much was an act of autonomy but rather based on social influences such as a pending court order and potential fines. Stories will tell us about the individual but also 'the terrain of the social [and] ... insights into the socially constructed nature of our experiences' (Goodson, 2013:30).

The example of *John Peel* in the Learning Lives Project (Goodson et al., 2010), demonstrates how a narrative which is heavily personal, and does not take into account social changes as readily, can struggle when changes to the social context does occur. Narratives that do not blend both the personal and social dimensions are limited in their flexibility and adaptation to changes in circumstances. In understanding one's own narrative, there is narrative learning. Goodson et al. (2010)

maintain that narrative learning is ongoing involving the construction and reconstruction of narratives. This involves a great deal of reflection when sharing one's stories with others or just within themselves. However, in telling the story to others, the construction becomes further a social act as the narrative will need to be understood by the audience listening. In retelling to oneself, (an interior conversation), the narrative is personal with an understanding of how that story may be accepted on a social level. In sharing a narrative, the story may have already been rehearsed making the narrative both personal and socially constructed. For every individual, there will be a harmony or balance struck between these two types of construction due to the manner in which different individuals are differently resourced and located in terms of the way they narrate.

Although my position is not one of a feminist sociologist, Goodson (2013) refers to Armstrong (1987) explaining the constructionist angle I am taking with my research quite accurately: 'Stories are pre-eminently ways of relating individual and events to social contexts, ways of weaving personal experiences into their social fabric' and develop 'further understanding of the social construction of each person's subjectivity' (Goodson, 2013:30).

It can be difficult to see identity through narratives as being purely social. The question arises whether identity construction is a social or individual process. I am maintaining that identity construction is a blend of both and their level of interaction would further determine the identity portrayed to others through their narrative.

### **Constructing a Narrative and Agency**

As implied above, the construction of identity is a product of surrounding structures and agency (an individual's choice). To say something is socially constructed is to emphasise its understanding and dependence on aspects of our social selves. Social construction may therefore be the outcome of human choices, or agency, rather than the laws of nature. The construction of an individual sense of self is achieved by personal choices regarding who and what we may choose to associate with. Such

approaches are liberating in their recognition as they emphasise a sense of agency in the individual in order to construct their own professional teacher identity.

Agency is therefore a notion linked to identity, socially constructing identity and identity presented in the form of a narrative. In emphasising the importance of structure, agency and reflexivity, 'the conceptualisation of the self as an embodied agent...requires an appreciation of the reflexive process of the social self' (Callero, 2003:119). As discussed, Meadian theories highlight role choices, or different behaviours people or individuals exhibit based on the role they are playing. The individual is involved in a moment of reflection leading to Mead's 'self-reflecting society'. This implied having a choice to make, and time to reflect. The term identity then becomes a network of many identities depending on the assumption of the role people were expected to play. Mead's 'I' and 'me' also distinguish between two forms of identity, with the 'me' being a self that is bound and structured whereas 'I' associates with a self which is fluid and creative. These are both, according to Mead, socially constructed. Giddens also described an 'integrated narrative' that may be evident in self-representation which is 'reflexively understood by the person in terms of her or his biography' (1991:53). It is important then to consider 'micro' aspects of society (human agency) and 'macro' aspects (social structures) which are connected to one another.

Holland et al. (1998) describe how individuals are knowledgeable and committed participants with regard to their identity interacting with social surroundings and 'cultural worlds' while finding opportunities to re-describe themselves. This has a resulting effect of altering the cultural world we are participating which emphasises the importance of interactions between structure and agency. Holland et al. (1998) also discuss 'figured worlds' as ones that 'distribute us, not only by relating actors to landscapes of action' which people can form identities and identities can be formed within. Further to this:

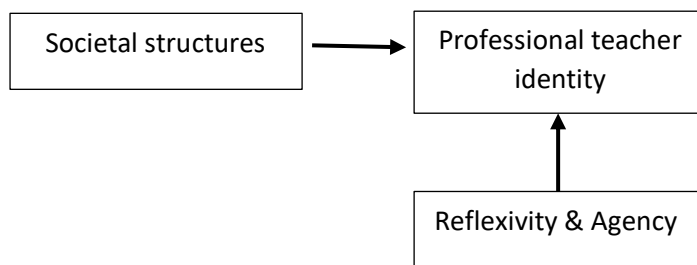
The identities we gain within figured worlds are...historical developments, grown through continued participation in the positions defined by the social organisation of those worlds' activity.

(Holland et al., 1998:41)

In short, depending on the 'figured world' one is in, a different identity may be formed which conforms to the social constructs. Our 'role identities' may be versions of our 'self', and could be linked to social positioning, reliant upon the expectations that a person perceives their audience have of them (Stryker, 1980). Buckingham's thoughts are similar to Stryker's notions of role identities (1980), also discussed by Turner (2010), and Cahill's 'public' identities (1998). Linked to structure and agency, identity can therefore be constrained or enabled by structure, but also have agency.

Thus, in order to construct such an identity, moments of reflection are essential. Identity construction and reconstruction can therefore enable personal agency (Giddens, 1991) which assists the individual to develop a stronger sense of self. Agency involves an intrinsic motivation and strong personal involvement. With the example of *John Peel* from *The Learning Lives project* in Goodson et al. (2010), the script may work for someone so there is little reason to change the story thus fitting the 'ecology' of one's actions resulting in a large degree of continuity and stability. Biesta and Tedder (2006 and 2007) discuss how socially the position can remain stable although there are small shifts which may have occurred. However, when the social framework alters, then the script must also change, thus the narrative may need to be reconstructed. Narratives are therefore used as a tool or mechanism for handling change in order to maintain the continuity of the script that may have once existed.

So when identity is impacted on by societal structures, one may need to integrate into these structures, through the understanding of one's own identity so the individual to exist effectively in a social world. This is because meanings they assign to their self are shared within that society, and understood not only by the individual but by others. A relationship between the structures below could be viewed in the following way:



**Figure 2: Relationship between society, professional teacher identity and agency**

The more positive one's experiences are within a social structure, the stronger the individual's agency becomes (Polkinghorne, 1996). Mead (1934) described how society can shape self and self can shape social behaviour. Mead's ideas later developed into role choices, or different behaviours people or individuals exhibit based on the role they are playing. However, the question is why people decide on particular avenues depending on the choices set in front of them and the context they are in. This is the role of agency. The individual is involved in a moment of, or series of ongoing reflections leading to Mead's 'self-reflecting society'. This implied having a choice to make, and time to reflect.

Identity shared with others will commonly be conducted in the form of a narrative story (Bruner, 1990) as the action of telling a story allows the individual to assign relevance to particular actions thus creating a sense of purpose between the identity portrayed and an action's relevance within a narrative. The narratives themselves may also hold relevance within a particular society, certainly the society which the individual feels part of, and is constructing their identity in. Thus, identity is socially situated and presented. One has to acknowledge the societal backdrop in relation to the individual involved in the research. In the case of my research, the same school does provide

this, and being an insider researcher (see Methodology) means that my understanding of that backdrop is deeper than if conducted in a setting I was unfamiliar with. I understand the ethos of the school which may be important when teachers are defining their professional teacher identity.

Narratives are a tool, part of a culturally-bound practice (Plummer, 2001). In merging the concepts of narratives and, thus, identities being socially constructed and agency:

‘Life constructions’ are generated between twin poles of structure and subjectivity, and constructions only contain elements of reality if they also have a retroactive effect on underlying structures.

(Alheit in Knud Illeris, 2008:124)

Narrative construction requires various ‘supporters’ to initiate them. As biographical subjects we may consider ourselves as the ‘organisers’ of our life course. We will perform corrections to our life plans doing so with personal autonomy. There is a requirement for the individual to be a social actor during self-reflexive activities which in turn may shape social contexts. ‘Biographicity’, as discussed in Illeris’ *Contemporary Theories of Learning* (2008), involves the narrative being redesigned multiple times, emphasising that the contexts are malleable and designable. However, reflexivity will not take place with the individual alone, but also depends on communication and interaction with others in relation to a social context, highlighting the socially constructed features of sharing one’s narrative. Narrative learning can be observed as the construction and reconstruction of identities; Goodson et al. (2010) also claims this, and the activity is therefore interactive and socially constructed, although still following ‘its own individual logic’. The structure of the narrative will remain open, possibly in order to integrate new experiences. This would result in altered scripts, alternate versions of one’s narrative, and identity at various turning points, or life stages, for the individual. These turning points may be experienced through interactions with society, others, and (internally) with oneself through reflective processes. Alheit and Dausien (2000) state that:



Biographical learning is both a 'constructionist achievement' of the individual integrating new experiences into the self –referential 'architectonic' of particular personal past experiences and a 'social process' which makes subjects competent and able to actively shape and change their social world'.

(Alheit and Dausien, 2008:126)

This is a very important quote as the 'self-referential' implies that the individual is authoring their narratives and being architectonic implies that social structure is a changing. As one learns through their narrative construction, one will need to keep their scripts open in the anticipation of new or altered experiences to be integrated. This will be in reference to the individual's understanding of their self. In being 'architectonic' narratives and identity are constructed (archi-), but in a continuous process of movement/shifting positions (-tectonic).

Tomkins (1979) proposed the script theory of personality relating a developing individual as akin to a playwright, whose scripts are used in the organising of one's identity. The experiences that the individual faces will cause these scripts to alter, and these experiences will change as the individual moves through life. Goodson et al. (2010) also speak of scripts in relation to narratives and stories, some of which may be rigidly kept to, while others will seem more fluid and adaptable.

Although McAdams' *Personal narrative and the life story* (2008) is written from a psychological perspective much can be applied in terms of social construction of narratives and identity to my research. McAdams discusses the 'self' or 'identity' as the 'personality' one shows to others. Many terms used in relation to identity appear to be similar from the outset but the deeper definitions may vary. However, it is useful to be aware of the variations of words and terms written about the concept of identity when drawing upon theories, methods and findings for my research.

**In constructing stories, we are in the task of constructing and reconstructing our identity, and media could be used as a vehicle to generate data on the construction of professional teacher**

**identities.** McAdams relates this construction to a struggle we have in understanding who we are. In terms of telling our story, the more rehearsed and recounted an individual is at sharing their personal stories, the less the struggle may be unless in the social context there is some form of change or upheaval that draws into question the quality of the narrative, that is, how suited the narrative is at continuing to make sense of oneself and the social framework it is situated:

...within the realm of narrative identity ... personality shows it's most important and intricate relations to culture and society.

(McAdams, 2008:242)

Social constructionist approaches have also been offered by Gergen (1991) viewing a personal narrative as situated performances. This idea also links back to Goffman's concepts of 'front' and 'back' stage performances of identity. As McAdams comments on Gergen's notions (1991):

...people tell and enact as many different kinds of stories in social life as there are social situations within which to tell and enact them. [They will be] deconstructed so as to reveal shifting dynamics involved.

(McAdams, 2008:243)

A narrative identity can be a salient challenge for individuals in modern societies especially in seeking personal integration into a social structure (Giddens, 1991). There is a difficulty in the lack of guidelines associated with the 'right type' of narrative and balance of integration into society. The individual therefore has to interpret and reflect heavily on how their narrative identity should come across to others in order for acceptance in a social context, that is, how well their narrative conforms in a societal context. People will narrate their stories in different ways depending on the listener, and they can alter this narration between different nodes of story-telling also (McLean, 2005). McAdams (2008) and Pasupathi (2006) both discuss dramatic and reflective story-telling. Dramatic story-telling will be rich in quotes from the original event thus re-enacting the event in some way. In comparison, the

reflective mode will be more thoughtful where there is a focus on what the event may mean to the individual and the emotions that might be attached to the story shared. More details of the theories and my justification for choosing narrative research methods for my study are detailed in the Methodology chapter.

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### 3. Literature Review

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This section of my literature review explores the general theories of identity, which I have drawn upon over the course of my research. It explores personal, and core identities, and the role of society in the construction and reconstruction of the self, including ways that identity can be performed or masked. Identity is therefore not a static notion and a person may present different facets of their identity depending on who they are in the company of. While they project this identity, alterations may occur in order to match the expectations of the audience. Being able to define one's identity is essential in distinguishing an individual's place within groups.

#### Theories of Identity

In order to conduct a piece of research on teachers' professional identities, it is important to outline general theories of identity first. One point to note is that through the many roles we may adopt, many identities may be encompassed in a single individual. For instance, although focused on a teacher identity, I cannot lose sight of the individual's personal identity or what they seek as their anchored, coherent core identity. In general, an identity can be how someone categorises themselves in relation to their position, role, job, or class. For a teacher, they would describe themselves in terms of being a professional in a school in the role of a teacher. Personal identity on the other hand as proposed by Deschamps and Devos (1998:3) 'is what makes you similar to yourself and different from others' with the more elaborate definition by Doise (1998) incorporating the embeddedness of a personal identity in a social context:

Personal identity can be considered to be a social representation, an organizing principle of individual positioning in a field of symbolic relationships between individuals and groups.

(Doise, 1998:23)

In addition, identity may not be fixed it is a transient notion which might alter through the phases of an individual's life; the terms identity construction and reconstruction. However, there may be a part of that identity which is core or anchored which may travel with that individual when they are in different roles, such as the role of a mother or father. At the heart of identity construction is the:

...challenge of preserving one's sense of *personal continuity* over time, of establishing a sense of *sameness* of oneself, despite the necessary changes that one must undergo in terms of redefining the self.

(Harter 1990:352).

It is this implication that constructing a coherent sense of self means multiple identities can be integrated as part of an individual to suit various societal constructs.

### **Identity and Society**

The concept of identity has been investigated in various disciplines including philosophy, psychology, economics, but for the purpose of my research, the field will be that of sociology and cultural studies. The term identity is therefore a multi-disciplinary concept so its definition can be slippery. Within the field of social science itself, there are also obstacles in presenting a definition of identity depending on the theorist one chooses to adopt (Meadian, Vygotskian, or Eriksonian). More fitting with my research is a Meadian identity, as discussed in my Theoretical Framework. Stryker and Burke's (2000) review of identity theories identifies sociological structures with identities (Stryker, 1980) and psychological internal processes of self-verification and internal dynamics (Burke, 1980; Turner, 2010). As many identity theories overlap and interlink, a single formula cannot be applied.

The work of Giddens (1991) draws together ideas of social structure, identity, reflexivity and media influences to identity. To explain reflexivity, Giddens' notion is that we actively shape, reflect on, and monitor ourselves. We are then able to craft our narratives throughout our life. Giddens describes identity as something conscious, as something that we need to work out the roles we play. He considers our identity is subject to change in mass media in a post-modern society. He believes

that information and ideas from media can contribute to shaping society and are involved in ways people reflect on their own identity (1991:70). As a result, there is an 'integrated narrative' that may be evident in self-representation which is 'reflexively understood by the person in terms of her or his biography' (1991:53). It is important then to consider 'micro' aspects of society (human agency) and 'macro' aspects (social structures) which are connected to one another. Work by both Durkheim (1938) and Weber (1978) supports micro-level and macro-level activity being interrelated, and both levels of activity inform each other. Relating back to my own research, the 'micro' aspect will be the teachers' identities, as part of their daily lived experiences and the 'macro' structures will include the media as well as other structures such as gender, ethnicity and social class. This approach is influenced by Giddens' theory of structuration (1984:25/6) in which he identified that social structure may be reproduced and liable to change due to the acts of individuals, specifically shifting patterns of attitudes and behaviours.

In relation to my own research, teachers may have experienced changes to their teacher identity through phases of their career and these changes may be due to surrounding structures such as media influences. Giddens therefore provides a useful framework establishing the role of identity in a modern society as these post-modern societies are marked by heightened reflexivity and are conscious of their own construction. Thus, people may strive to maintain their habits and routines, but are not resistant to external influences.

Similar to Giddens, Nias (1985:105) also writes about the self as a 'social yet reflexive product'. Holland et al., (1998:3) also makes links between people and society suggesting that identities form and re-form over time. Callero (2003) offers a notion of identity whereby 'the conceptualisation of the self as an embodied agent...requires an appreciation of the reflexive process of a social self', emphasising the importance of structure and agency, and reflexivity. However, there is a lack of satisfaction in roles when individuals struggle to negotiate the position in a group where their identity may have been

originally verified. If identity cannot be maintained, they may be less inclined to remain in the group as they are unable to adopt and preserve self-meanings (Riley and Burke, 1995). Preserving self-meaning demonstrates how 'one identifies with the group [and] is committed to the role' (Stets and Burke, 2000). An understood identity may reinforce who one is; at other times they may 'constrain the self' (Stets and Burke, 2000). Stemming from these various theorists (Cooley, 1902; Mead, 1934; Serpe, 1987; Serpe and Stryker, 1987), identity can therefore be argued as something with internalised meaning and our 'role-identity' (Stryker, 1980) is external and linked to social positioning. Holland et al., (1998:3) makes links between person and society, but the individual as a historical product, suggesting that identities may form and re-form over time:

People tell others who they are, but even more important, they tell themselves and then try to act as though they are who they say they are. These self-understandings, especially those with strong emotional resonance for the teller, are what we refer to as identities.

(Holland et al., 1998: 3)

Holland et al. (1998) point out that even if cultural worlds may be dissimilar, the identity-making process may still be similar; individuals form their identity from the 'cultural resources available to them' (Holland, 1998:4). Identity is therefore, according to them, a social product (Holland et al., 1998:5). People develop selves in relation to social identities and cultural persona and in their name perform and (re)create the activities meaningful to those worlds. Therefore, the process of identity-making involves not only their past and present, but also the cultural situations that the individual may be experiencing at that moment. My research has already identified that cultural and social experiences affects the way identity is formed and communicated to others. Over time, other experiences may also alter the way the narratives are formed and communicated. Social roles can become part of the self (Stryker, 1980). Therefore, one can argue that society very much plays a part in constructing the self as well as our role identities.

## Types of Identity

Nias discusses the 'I' which she suggests people are intuitively aware of and is linked to a deep sense of **personal identity**, and as Woods (1985) notes, 'personal identity' is the image one has of oneself. Other theorists, for example Serpe, 1987; Serpe and Stryker, 1987, also consider identity as salient but also one that will become stable for a period of time, and this will vary from one individual to the next as Southworth (1995:167) states that identity is 'not entirely impervious to change'. The reflexive nature of our identity is illuminated once again while we act out a role altering others' perceptions of us (Joas, 1983). There is an identity for all roles we have to play especially in institutional domains (Turner, 2010:43). The concept of **role identities** can be linked with this particular research as teachers' professional identities. **Core identities** (see p31) might be considered salient, more protected and shielded from others compared to role identities. Individuals are thus presenting the **mask** (Woods, 1985) rather than what completely lies underneath the mask. The narratives I collected from my sample were regarded as the teachers' role identities, with the knowledge that personal, core identities (see below) may emerge at points during their narratives.

In masking parts of an identity comes choice. Goffman explored identity as a part that people play and could also reveal beliefs one holds about their own identity based on the choice of the role they perform (1959). The individual could therefore be convinced by the identity they perform to others as one that is their own. These role-identities could become fostered within the individual, once the role becomes something familiar and one the individual is comfortable with:

In the end, our conception of our role becomes second nature and an integral part of our personality. We come to the world as individuals, achieve character and become persons

(Park, 1950:250)

There seem to be 'many different social selves as there are distinct groups of persons...He generally shows a different side of himself to each of these different groups' (Flournoy cited in Goffman, 1990:57). The individual will seek **multiple identifications** with others, on the basis of social, cultural, and biological characteristics. (Buckingham, 2008:1).



Although not a notion I will be arguing for, there are researchers who have adopted the term '**core-identity**', such as Merchant (2006) who discusses the existence of a 'transient' and '**anchored**' identity. He describes a continuum where individuals' self-representations move along. However, along that continuum are aspects of one's identity that will remain 'anchored'. 'Core' identity has also been referred to as 'unique' or a 'personal' identity described by Hewitt (1994), Schopflin (2001) and Hitlin (2003). Cahill (1998) alluded to a public self and a selfhood (core self), but argued that the unique self is in fact 'made in the image of the public person'. Therefore, understanding the context that the public self is in is necessary in order to define one's core identity. It is the core identity, the part that needs continuity and stability, which adapts to contemporary conditions in order to prosper (Adler and Adler, 1999). This requires maintaining an understanding of self. In that respect, the individual does hold control (agency) over their identities (Turner, 2010).

In the context of this research, constructing and reconstructing a narrative involved multiple identities integrated as part of a professional teacher identity, and the nature of these multiple identities evolved from the teachers' perceptions of societal constructs. The media images of teachers presented to each teacher varied, thus showing multiple identities a teacher in media could have. This resulted in teachers firstly narrating their own reflections of a single media image of a teacher, followed by reflections upon their own professional teacher identities. This process was then repeated with a different media image of a teacher. Goodson (2013:94) would describe these individuals as *multiple describers*. The nature of a teacher's professional identities was therefore fluid and flexible (Buckingham, 2008:1). This notion is explained further in the section below. For instance, a single teacher may have discussed their professional teacher identity in terms of their subject, their relationship and interactions with students, staff or parents, their identity in the classroom, in the corridor, or at the gates of the school. The idea of multiple identities within a single role takes Goffman's notion of 'front and back stage' identity further to involve several 'stages', while aiding the

understanding of interpersonal social interactions. The teachers' identities were therefore not static, but malleable, based on the teacher's judgements of the context they are in or faced with.

### **Identity as a fluid notion**

Linked to the notion that identity is not impervious to change, Buckingham (1987:1) classified identity as an '**ambiguous and slippery**' term but unique to each of us. He later discusses that 'the formation of identity often involves a process of stereotyping or "cognitive simplification" that allows people to distinguish easily between self and others, and to define themselves and their group in positive ways' (Buckingham, 2008:6). Hall and Du Gay (1996:4) propose that our identity is 'partly constructed in fantasy' so it could be possible that media may impact on the level of imagination one may have during this construction.

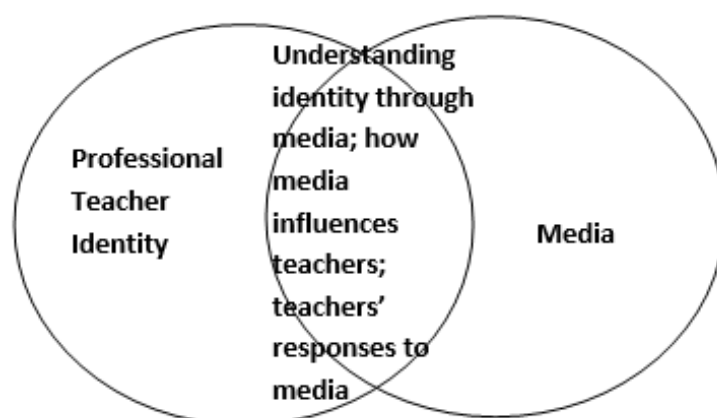
Goodson et al. (2010) examined that **reflecting** upon one's identity may be linked to the individual's **personal memories** even back to their early childhood, and that it is important for the individual to be adaptable with the way they narrate their identity thus being able to adopt multiple identities. This means that their role in different social contexts may be altered in some way, much like how I would describe my narrative as varied when I discussed my pregnancy to different groups of people. Within the context of my research, although focused on a teacher's professional identities, teachers may slip into conscious streams of other identities, that is, how they recognize themselves to be during the story-telling. It is important, therefore, to open doors to other identities, other roles throughout our lives.

This section of my literature review has explored the general theories of identity which I have drawn upon over the course of my research. I have explored theorists who may be linked to my research with an emphasis on Meadian theories of identity as well as Giddens' concepts of reflexivity as this points to an awareness of oneself depending on the macro and micro structures of society. In engaging with the reflexive nature of identity, I have cited the work of Buckingham who made the important point

of the fluid nature of our identities, also supported by Goodson's notions of streams of other identities through the stories that we share. The following section in this chapter will identify theories specifically linked to professional teacher identity, and popular media, including the history of teacher images in media stemming from the 1950s.

### Professional Teacher Identity and Popular Media

My research has been focused in the areas of professional teacher identity, and popular media. It is where these areas overlap that my specific research focus is positioned as demonstrated in the following Venn diagram:



**Figure 3: Venn diagram - overlapping research areas**

**Professional teacher identity** addresses the complex nature of the teaching profession, taking both personal and professional sides of being a teacher into account. My research supports the notion that being a teacher is more than just a category of employment. The word 'teacher' embodies notions of identity, which are largely based on teachers' experiences in the classroom (the present), from a number of different school cultures (the past), and teachers' aspirations of where they envisage their careers progressing towards (the future). A professional teacher identity will also be experienced in relation to others (colleagues, students, parents) and society (ethos of the school, the location of the school, memories of being taught, images of teachers in media and teaching they were exposed to in their past, to name but a few), finally influencing how they present themselves in that role. The **popular media** I have concentrated my research on has included films and television programmes (fictional drama and reality documentaries). Social media and non-fictional media such as newspapers and the news were options as forms of media in this research. However, this would encompass a different area of research, and so were excluded due to how fast technology and social media evolves and how changeable non-fictional media can be. My research maintains that there is an ever-growing

cultural undertone of teaching in media which could be influencing teachers and their professional identity. Media has the ability to convey a variety of roles to its audience, and if the audience finds the role portrayed as relatable, then this may influence identity construction within that individual. Thus, popular media images of teachers could be treated as a trigger for creating a teacher identity, and could be useful for a reflective practitioner.

Merging these two areas, my research interests have been to understand professional teacher identity through the media, specifically, how media images of teachers influences teachers' professional identities, and how teachers feel about these images of teachers in media. I am also interested in how teachers portrayed in media might impact on teacher-student relationships.

In the sections that follow, I will firstly explain what I have learned from the research on professional teacher identity followed by discussing the existing research based on media related to my research (i.e. film and TV). I will then describe research which merges these two fields outlining where my research is situated in relation to them.

### Teachers' Professional Identity

There is much research available specifically exploring **teachers'** professional identity. For instance, MacLure (1993) describes identity as necessary as an organising principle for teachers; Ben-Peretz (1995) uses memory research to understand the construction of professional wisdom in veteran teachers; Huberman (1993) and Day et al. (2007) suggest different career phases of teachers dictate the concerns teachers have at work. Cohen (2009) attempt to uncover the traits of long-serving teachers in difficult schools revealing aspects of teachers' identities. Eilam and Poyas (2009) discuss the existence of teaching-learning episodes in relation to professional development of teachers in which a lack of training opportunities for career development results in changes to teachers' professional identities. Loftstrom et al. (2010) explain how emerging teacher identities need support in order to develop further, while understanding that change of any sort can be a catalyst for instability

in teachers' identities (Goodson and Sikes, 2001; Day et al., 2007). Research on identities also analyses the beliefs and assumptions that can be revealed through images of teachers (Judge, 1995; McCulloch, 2009).

A teacher's professional identity is associated with being a member of a community of teachers and identifying with that role. This can further be associated with identity being influenced by aspects of society and a wider culture. The 'society' focus in my research is media, although other societal influences emerge through my research. The projection of a professional teacher identity requires a conscious understanding, and thus a personal choice. This implies autonomy and therefore agency. A teacher's professional identity can be situated as an *occupational* identity, meaning the way one's occupation and identity are inextricably linked, as well as a role identity. Kielhofner (2008:106) defines an occupational identity as 'a composite sense of who one is and wishes to become as an occupational being generated from one's history of occupational participation' demonstrating continuity from the past through to one's future.

### **Tensions associated with professional teacher identities**

Teachers' professional identities have had increasing attention from researchers (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011) as it addresses the complex nature of the teaching profession by taking both personal and professional sides of being a teacher into account. Burke and Stets (2009) differentiates between various 'bases' for identities. The result is a triage of a personal identity, role identity and social identity. The personal identity refers to the set of meanings defining the person as a unique individual. The role identity has internalized meanings of a role, or the set of expectations tied to a social position and guiding the attitudes and behaviours that individuals apply to themselves. Finally, the social identity is defined as based on a person's identification with a social group. Although these identities differ, they may operate simultaneously in different situations (Burke & Stets, 2009). Their professional identity includes the individual's perception of who they are as a teachers and also their personal career trajectory in terms of where they would like to be. 'There is a lot of interest...in the

personal dimensions of teachers' lives in knowing what teachers are like and what makes them tick' (MacLure, 1993:311). However, the term 'professionalism' can be problematic and harbouring 'conceptual difficulties and ambiguities' (McCulloch et al., 2000:14).

The VITAE (Variations in Teachers' Work, Lives, and their Effects on Pupils) project outlines the various ways in which teachers' professionalism at different stages of their career are influenced by changes thus affecting their professional teacher identity (Day et al., 2007; Day et al., 2009). These can vary in relation to departmental changes, policy changes and reform, personal reasons, changes to job title, additional responsibilities, and curriculum changes to name but a few. The scrutiny of teachers' professional identities can result from expectations of identities that teachers find challenging to successfully conform to. For instance, teachers may be struggling with iconographic images that people may be expecting teachers to adopt as part of their professional identity (Warburton and Saunders, 1996). These iconic images could stem from media, for example through particular teacher stereotypes on television. Teacher professionalism can be seen as a tension between the identity expected and the identity experienced (Provenzo et al., 1989). As outlined by Warburton and Saunders (1996:308), media reports including professional journals describe a deprofessionalisation of teachers especially due to the various changes taking place.

### **Emotional responses linked to professional teacher identities**

Emotional responses may be regarded as a reaction to a question or comment that may be brief but will appear as a change in tone of voice, gestures, or language used in this study. MacLure outlined identity as an organising factor in the lives of teachers (1993). It is an important part of identity to be able to visualise and accept oneself as a teacher. Those who fail to do so may experience difficulties in developing a teacher identity. Although an obvious point, understanding one's self is also linked to our emotions, and as Hargreaves states, 'emotions are at the heart of teaching' (1998:835). Thus, there is an emotional or sensory relationship between teachers and the media; not just a rational or intellectual understanding. Media representations can be a reference point for some teachers helping

them to identify with their own self and professional teacher identity. Both Day and Gu (2009) and McIntyre (2010) stressed the importance of emotions when understanding teachers' professional identities therefore resulting in an emotional identity. Those who struggle with this may experience greater emotional responses to representations of teachers in media linked to their own professional teacher identity. Hong (2010) confirmed the importance of relationships and emotions as a component of professional teacher identities in his study of teachers across four different stages of their teaching careers. Emotion was perceived as a component of teachers' professional identities. Other variables were also influential, but emotion was the most relevant component for teachers who dropped out of the teaching profession demonstrating the greatest emotional burnout in the study.

### **Performing a professional teacher identity**

Teachers' professional identities may be performed in some way, consciously enacted to others. Waller (1932) described the identity of the teacher as one that was a performance. He observed that this created a gap between teachers and students in that students may not know the 'truth' behind their teacher's identity, the 'back stage' identity (Goffman, 1959:114). This concept is relevant to my third research question on teacher-student relationships. Waller describes teachers who are presented through 'institutional bars' separating students from teachers (1932:232) implying an outward performance of identity. This idea has been expressed by Weber and Mitchell (1995) and earlier by Goffman:

When an individual plays a part he implicitly requests his observers to take seriously the impression that is fostered before them. They are asked to believe that the character they see actually possesses the attributes he appears to possess.

(Goffman, 1990:28).

How aware people may be when they present their character or identity to others is not entirely clear but much of the research I have cited puts an emphasis on individual agency when presenting an identity. Personal choices and autonomy are therefore important in identity construction. Applying



the concept of media representation of teachers in popular culture to the presentation of a professional teacher identity, Goffman (1990:32) distinguishes between 'front-stage' and 'back-stage' behaviour, referred to as a dramaturgical model aiding the understanding of interpersonal social interactions. 'Back stage', there are opportunities to be honest leaving the impression one creates at the front stage (Goffman, 1990).

Both Goffman and Park describe an identity as one on show with Park using the idea of a mask to symbolise the identity someone may have:

It is in these roles that we know each other; it is in these roles that we know ourselves...

In a sense, and in so far as his mask represents the conception we have formed of ourselves – the role we are striving to live up to...our conception of our role becomes second nature and an integral part of our personality.

(Park, 1950:249)

This metaphor reflects the interchangeable nature that our identities have, and depending on the context, a different mask may be used. Teachers may therefore have many different 'masks' that they utilise depending on the context, which Cooley (1902) described as 'a cant or pose'. We can replace the word mask with 'roles' which I think is more fitting to this research. This presentation of self in a role can be 'socialised, moulded, and modified' (Goffman, 1990:44), but this depends on society's expectations, or what the individual perceives as society's expectations. Meyrowitz (1985) coined 'middle region behaviour' using Goffman's early work describing a blurring of front and back stage behaviour rather than separate entities. This creates a symbiosis between the two, yet could be interpreted as lacking sincerity, being misleading, and duplicitous but could be argued as fit for purpose. Furthermore, do teachers have a particular identity for the purpose of their role as a teacher shifting '...from transmitter of culture towards *animateur*' (Judge, 1995:262)? Here Judge is describing an animated presentation of self to others, that we are not just transmitting information to others but are also concentrating on how we transmit this information. The word *animateur* is fitting for this research as it is commonly used in theatre, by illustrators and film makers:

Sometimes the term 'animateur' is translated as 'facilitator' or 'moderator' or 'motivator' but this rather understates its meaning. If we return to the Greek origins of the word 'animation' then we are likely to be drawn to Aristotle and his distinction between that which is alive - and that which is inanimate.

(Smith, 2009: online source).

Are teachers performing a specific identity in the classroom, therefore acting as the *animateur*, and what do teachers think about media images of teachers which are made to entertain? What is therefore the effect of these images on teacher professional identity?

In this research I attempted to explore the connections between teacher identity and media within the wider structures of society. In developing a coherent professional teacher identity, 'performers may give the impression that...they never had a learning period to fumble through' (Goffman, 1990:56). This enables allowances for changes along the course of constructing and reconstructing one's professional teacher identity. This implies an awareness that alterations to a professional teacher identity is present especially in the early stages of teaching, and another area which I can explore in my research.

## The History of Media and Teachers in Media

### **The History of Media**

The history of media is important to outline as media deals with the communication of information and ideas in the form of words and images. This provides the necessary background information linked to this research. Its significance stems from the printed version in newspapers through to radio, television, satellite and cable, and the internet (including social media). In relation to my research, I will be predominantly focusing on the age of images (television and film). Different societies and cultures started their historical journeys through media separately and individually from each other. However, media has converged, so much so that these societies and cultures now travel together with most of the information that presented through media, including the type of media, which is across these various countries. Although not part of my research, both the press and radio need recognition in terms of being a type of media. The role of the press reflected the concerns of society but also shaped them. It was used as a means to probe as well as report the news. The press was considered a force in society by the 1900s, and whatever the state of law at the time, the press was difficult to control. Peter Cunningham's (1992) study of changing press presentations of teachers in 1950, 1970 and 1990, for instance, also an important study. The findings include that the press greatly influence the attitudes of the public especially through television and newspapers. However, a criticism of this finding include attitudes not being regularly documented in a balanced manner, which the study highlights for reasons such as some individuals not owning a television especially in the early stages of the study in the 1950s. In addition to this, there is undoubtedly a complexity in the relationship between people's opinions and what the press documents. Wiklund (2003) also conducted similar research, but focusing on how representations of teachers have changed in a leading Swedish newspaper since the 1980s. With both studies, what we can be sure of is that there is no simple cause and effect relationship but structures such as media can produce a foundation for opinions from the public and teachers.

### **How teacher images in film and on television have changed over time**

Research into teachers in film and in television programmes encourages a wider understanding of links that can be made to history, culture, society, education, media and identity construction. How these teacher images might be characterised can reflect collective opinions about wider cultural and societal influences, an area which I am interested in. Teacher images, or representations, do seem to fall under specific categories if categorised in a very simplistic manner according to published research. There are the heroic teachers (Farhi, 1999), as well as 'single-mindedly devoted teachers' and cynical teachers who 'persist despite frustration and heartbreak' (Edelman, 1990:28), which are similar to Ayers' 'saints' and 'slugs' (Ayers, 1993). This method of categorising is not only for the professional educator; Weems (2003) includes images of substitute teachers compared with professional teachers (permanent staff) classifying substitute teachers as three main types: incompetent, deviant, and the guerrilla superhero. In addition to this, she also links popular culture narrative with lived experiences of teachers and educational policy. Some may argue categorising can result in a reductive construction of teacher identities, especially as film and television have layers of meaning. Giroux (2002), for instance, believed that:

Films do more than entertain, they offer up subject positions, mobilise desires, influence us unconsciously, and help to construct a landscape of...culture

(Giroux, 2002:3)

According to Dalton and Linder (2008) from 1980 to 2000, films with teachers were widely seen by audiences either in the cinema or on television. The research focus at this time focused mainly on race (Giroux, 2002) and sexuality. However, depictions of this on television in teacher-related television programmes were non-existent. There was a difference in how female teachers were represented, and it could be argued that this is still the case. Male teachers were depicted with having a masculine power in a social space, whereas female teachers were often at conflict with maternal and alluring

powers in a domestic space. The role of film and television played an important role in establishing our expectation and thus shaping identities, as what happens in the fictional classroom and the real classroom can be revealing of other ideas and concepts linked back to identities and society. Dalton's research (2006) on the Hollywood Curriculum documented patterns of teacher images beginning to emerge, with many falling into the category of 'the good teacher'. However, in films, there was not only 'the good teacher' but the 'dedicated' and 'heroic' teacher. This was opposed to representations of headteachers who were often authoritarian with autocratic management styles, bureaucratic, or lacking competency, with the latter often being an exaggerated trait. Any dominant representations, such as an individual in a more senior role, would usually be at conflict with the 'dedicated' teacher, who would usually become involved with what they learn from their students. It is also important to note the different types of schooling there are now compared to what there previously was. For example, there is now an era of mass state educated students and new forms of training as a result of this, compared to mainly elite schools. Thus, there is a varied image of teachers in both of these establishments.

Below is an outline of some of the main changes in television programmes and film which have involved teachers as predominant characters, from 1950s to 2000s.

### **Images of teachers in the UK and US (Dalton and Linder, 2008)**

In the **1950s**, images of teachers on television followed the Hollywood image closely; they were viewed as comforting and reassuring. The 1950s was considered to be a decade of conformity and images of teachers in media generally reflected this. However, there were some exceptions to this such as *Whacko!* (BBC: 1956-60), and *Carry on Teacher* (1959). By the **1960s** television programmes were rarely focused in the classroom, although in the school environment; race was becoming a consideration beyond the news and into sitcoms on television. However, all sitcoms portrayed teachers with varying degrees of 'remove from socio-political fray'. The authors remark that although,

in America, there was much cultural turmoil, television programmes did little to reflect this, giving opportunity for escapism instead. Teacher characters were seen as 'safe'. Most episodes were structured around the classroom in **1970s** in films, but usually focused on life lessons in tolerance, for example *To Sir, With Love* (1967). In television programmes, there were many more teacher characters. However, teachers were usually a minor role compared to the 1960s and were on for short periods of time with few focusing on the actual teaching, with exceptions such as *Mind Your Language* (ITV: 1977-1979), *Please Sir* (LWT: 1968-72) and *The Fenn Street Gang* (ITV: 1971-1973) in the UK. In the **1980s** there was a return of conservatism (predominantly in America) validated educational privilege for elite students, and teachers were complicit in perpetuating their students' needs. The **1990s** was a decade which marked a big change in teacher images including homosexuality and stories of abuse, therefore depicting teachers' personal as well as their professional lives. Teachers were gradually not seen teaching as much, but more often sparring with superiors, administration or colleagues. The **2000s** embraced multiculturalism more so than in previous decades. Teachers on television became more like 'real' teachers (at least that was the aim by broadcasters) more so than the teacher in films. This included the manner in which some characters would stay for short periods of time and then leave swiftly, whereas others would stay for the duration of the television show, much like an actual school which experiences various degrees of turnover. Many television programmes and films tackled more complex problems compared to previous decades, including stories relating to drugs and teacher-student relationships that crossed the line.

Dalton and Linder (2008:180) argue that 'all texts are intertextual and speak in some way to our lived experience, but teacher narratives have a particular resonance for those of us who are teachers...' The aim of their work is to establish patterns in popular culture in which teachers were involved as characters whether main characters or side-line characters. Dalton and Linder's focus was on American dramas up to 2008 (when the book was published). What both highlight is the growing shift towards portraying complex narratives, some controversial in nature, which could merge the 'leaky

boundaries' between popular culture and lived experiences. The reason this may be of importance is to emphasise the problems that may be present in education, such as on-going change and coping with those changes. This allows the viewer to understand more fully a teacher's narrative and experiences in their professional role. It is no wonder that the rationale Dalton and Linder had behind the change in teacher images would coincide with the emergence of reality documentaries about teachers during the 2000s. Reality documentaries are a genre of television programming that documents unscripted real-life situations. They commonly focus on drama, relationships and personal conflict rather than educating the viewer, although many reality documentaries based around particular careers (doctors, midwifery, and teaching) may be altering that description. This type of television programme has particular traits which set it aside from other documentaries, such as their unscripted nature, and the use of confessionals where characters are taken aside to talk more candidly about their thoughts on another person in the reality documentary or a particular situation. This doubles up the narrative that a viewer receives, possibly emphasising certain messages more than others. For this reason, I imagine reality documentaries will generate more viewer feedback as the messages are closer to the reality a viewer may experience, especially if the viewer can find some connection with the documentary content. However, the word 'reality' in itself is bound to create criticism as viewers may disagree with the manner in which a particular aspect of the programme is being portrayed either implicitly or explicitly. Reality documentaries have been available in some form on television for many decades, but became more of a phenomenon in the 1990s-2000s. *Big Brother* (orig. Channel 4: 2000-2010) was possibly the most notable reality programme on television. In the UK, this was first broadcast in 2000. As a category of popular culture on television, reality documentaries have had very little written about them. Reality documentaries with teaching as a focus emerged in the second decade of the 2000s, including *Educating Essex* (Channel 4: 2011), *Educating Yorkshire* (Channel 4: 2013), *Educating the East End* (Channel 4: 2014) and *Tough Young Teachers* (BBC Three: 2014). There have been others broadcast such as *Dream School* (SundanceTV:

2013 - ) and *Undercover Teacher* (Channel 4: 2006) but these examples failed to gain the same popularity as the previous four programmes.

With the proliferation of teachers in media, especially in reality documentaries, the use of media representations as a stimulus to explore professional teacher identities in this research is appropriate. The media images are likely to elicit different responses from different teachers as the images will mean something different to each teacher, including what was occurring during the point in time that they had seen these images, or even how frequently they had seen these images. Some teachers may view a media image of a teacher as a passing figure, whereas others may link these media images to an event. This could determine the extent to which the teachers reflect upon these images and relate the images back to their own professional identity. One would consider teachers in reality documentaries to be more 'real' than the more fictional teacher images in *Harry Potter*, for example. However, it is the extent to which the teacher can relate to in terms of their own professional teacher identity that can result in a media image being more 'real' than others, hence some teachers may well choose the more fantastical image over those in reality documentaries. When considering photographic evidence, Cronin (1998:75), found that individuals can move freely between realism and symbolism. Thus, the media images used in this research can all be considered as representations of reality, but the extent to which the image is 'real' is dependent on the teacher using the media image to reflect upon their own identity. The narratives will be subject to what the image was doing or claiming (how relatable the image is to the teacher) which then determines the nature of the media representation from the viewpoint of an individual teacher.

### Understanding Professional Teacher Identity through Media

In this section I will discuss the general findings in the area of media linked to identity as I am arguing that an ever-growing cultural undertone of teaching in media is influencing teachers and their professional identity. Although not taking a post-structuralist approach, the images of teachers



portrayed as opposed to actual teaching practice, Baudrillard documented in 1983 how repetitious images of teachers in media may have effaced a distinction between what is real and not. Gregory (2007) similarly discusses 'celluloid teachers' which keeps teaching as a common profession represented in media. He worries that these images could 'haunt' real classrooms due to an immediacy of emotion when watching such images of teachers; the viewer feels they are experiencing what could be reality first hand. Therefore, because the feelings are first hand, the viewer assumes their understanding of what they are watching is also first hand, and therefore true. Coupled with the fact that we have all experienced at education ourselves to reflect and relate back to, the conclusions drawn after watching teachers in media can often be skewed with reality. This, I postulate, may be a frustration among practising teachers at present, hence my determination to understand how teachers might be affected by media.

As media images of teachers can be interlinked with professional teacher identities, my interest is how the teachers' professional identities are affected by media became the focus of my research. Along with Mitchell and Weber, Fisher et al. (2008), I believe that images of teachers in media do play a role in the construction of teacher identity. Raimo et al. (2002), also consider that films, in particular, are a memorable way of conveying the role of teachers to a wider audience. However, they should be treated as a trigger for creating a 'popular' teacher identity, and could be useful for a reflective practitioner. However, in projecting a 'popular' teacher identity, we are generalising, implying that teacher identity is not varied which I am basing through my own experience is not the case at all. Nevertheless, trainee teachers may look at these images of teachers in media assuming they may need to fit neatly into these categories of teachers, making 'wistful attachments' (Robertson, 1997), thus being less aware that the professional identity of a teacher can be vastly different from one teacher to the next. Identity aside, media does have the benefit of making audiences more aware of issues that may be widespread in any establishment such as a school. Trier (2001), for example, supports media representations as their dramatic devices successfully illuminate problems arising in education that maybe professional texts may not. It was interesting to read that,

although films and TV may focus on the teacher if they are the subject of the scene, one needs to remind oneself that this is a filmic device and not a pedagogical device (Gale & Densmore, 2001). The perceived gap between notions of teaching developed during teacher education institutions and the 'real world' of teaching may be a particular challenge (Pinto & Monteiro 2002). Many internal and external sources may influence and therefore shape teachers' perceptions of themselves in the role of a teacher (Olsen, 2008).

Media can act as an indicator of identity which can contribute to the conceptualisation of teachers' professional identity. Media may be one of the devices teachers use to understand, structure and negotiate and perform their own professional identity. Warburton (1996) criticises the government and media's perceptions of teachers as one that:

...encourage[s] an iconoclastic perception of teachers and teaching... [which]...bears a firm relationship to teachers' sense of professional worth.

(Warburton, 1996:308)

Therefore, whatever identity may be established by the teacher may be contradicted by or even threatened by public opinion based on stereotypes set up by the media. Buckingham's work (2008), although focusing on the effects of media on the identity of the younger generation, can be adapted to answering: what is the influence of media on teachers' identities? It is not only students who are exposed to and influenced by media but teachers also. Weber and Mitchell, for instance, describe how the 1960s film *To Sir with Love* influenced not only their image of the teacher, but also Weber's decision to enter the teaching profession (Weber and Mitchell, 1995). My research draws upon theories of identity and questioning what influence media has played in the construction and negotiation of identity. This was explored through teachers' memories, stories and opinions. Weber and Mitchell mention that 'the significance of childhood...is not pursued seriously by teacher educators and other scholars' (Weber and Mitchell, 1995:6). Therefore, there may need to be an examination of teachers' childhood memories if one is to understand how teacher identity may be

forming even before teacher training begins which is partly what my research intends to explore. I am therefore implying that representations of teachers and education in media may have become measuring sticks for pre-service teachers, current teachers, students, and parents. The general public may also be comparing these images of teachers to their own educational experiences especially if what is represented resonates with the person who is viewing these representations. Such media representations may eventually form a version of teachers and education that may not be an accurate representation. Personal beliefs about education may also influence a teacher's sense of professional identity. This area has been studied extensively (Borko & Putnam, 1996; Fairbanks et al., 2010; Fang, 1996; Kagan, 1992; Pajares, 1992). Educational beliefs guide a teacher's actions and their perceptions of themselves in their work as teachers (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011). These beliefs may have been influenced by external sources such as media. For preservice teachers, this could result in internal struggles questioning the correct way to teach or whether they are adequate enough for the role of a teacher (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011; Flores, 2001). Farhi (1999) for instance, describes the 'superteacher myth' which could develop into an image that the public believe to be correct yet is far removed from reality. Farhi asserts the idea that films illustrate teachers as superhumans that are skilful at making an impact on others' lives but in an unrealistically short period of time. He argues that some teachers are forced to compete with their cinematic counterparts, and as a result this has placed a burden on teachers and their identity. Farhi is very hostile towards these representations of teachers, students and schools, condemning them as 'ridiculous' (1999:157). This applies to my first two research questions, whereby I am questioning how teachers feel about fictional representations of teachers in media, and the effect of popular images of teachers on teachers' professional identity.

### Merging professional teacher identity and media in relation to my research

There seem to be common approaches used in gathering data on teacher identities, including research linked to teacher images in media. Below I explore research firstly on teachers' identities gradually branching out to research with media as a theme. I will be challenging these approaches outlining the need for my research in the area of media and teacher identity. I found a number of studies and research closely related to my area of research and I will now look at each in turn.

My first example is by Pillen et al. (2013) who explored the professional identity of teachers in the Netherlands. They used a group of 24 beginning teachers. The research aim was to focus on tensions experienced by these teachers. They drew on previous research linked to understanding a sense of self and using findings from their research for continued professional development (CPD). Pillen et al.'s methods included defining 'tension' at the start of the interview as part of a semi-structured interview of the beginning teachers where they had to share their experiences of tensions in the early stages of teaching. If teachers struggled, they were given an example to assist their recall. This example was not specific to the teacher but a further explanation of where tensions may be experienced. The interview lasted 1.5 hours. Pillen et al. analysed the data using pre-assembled categories of professional identity tension. The researchers found 59 types of tension falling into three categories:

- (1) The change in role from student to teacher;
- (2) Conflicts between desired and actual support given to students; and
- (3) Conflicting conceptions of learning to teach

And found that:

...teacher educators and mentors in schools [should] pay serious attention to tensions like these that relate to beginning teachers' professional identity.

Pillen et al. (2013:660)

Pillen et al.'s research focuses on understanding the professional identity of teachers, and I argue that media has a role to play in this. A paper published by Brunner (1991) in America involved the researcher's choice of 10 films to analyse using a critical theory lens. The aim was to examine 'the impact of film and television stories on prospective teachers and the ways in which popular culture has influenced ideas formed about teaching roles and schooling'. Brunner believed that it would be beneficial for pre-service teachers to be given opportunities to explore their role of a teacher and what teaching means to them 'using popular film and television stories provides an opportunity to enhance the study of culture in teacher education' (1991:1).

Weber and Mitchell (1995) carried out research in America, including an analysis of previously published research which looked at the way images of educators can persist over time, including the importance of this continuity in terms of the space that teachers occupy in the eyes of both teachers and children. They used several artefacts, including media, which connect children with teachers, and teachers with their own formation of self. The media examples they used were teachers in movies, in addition to books, toys, TV shows, children's play, people's memories, writings and drawings. They made a collective interrogation of what these images as a whole meant for children and teachers, therefore resulting in a collective autobiography. The focus throughout is on the space teachers occupy compared to space students occupy rather than too much emphasis on identity, although this is mentioned in parts. Where Weber and Mitchell have focused on movies, they draw on research carried out as far back as 1959 with a specific emphasis on Hollywood films (Gerbner, 1963) so much of the media that Weber and Mitchell discuss was American-centred. The researchers carried out much of the interpretation and analysis of the artefacts, in addition to the teachers and children feedback. Not all the artefacts were explored by the teachers alone.

Research conducted with a British media focus by Ellsmore in 2005 involved a selection of films and TV programmes chosen by the researcher with most sources based in secondary schools and state schools, rather than primary and private schools. There were 16 films in total with 8 being British

and 3 being British TV programmes. She used two samples of secondary school teachers, one group of 17 to watch a selection of media mentioned, and another group of 13 to watch one episode of the first two series of *Teachers* (a Channel 4 sitcom). Teachers had to make a written response which Ellsmore then analysed. There was a scaffold for the written response using a questionnaire. It is not entirely clear why there were two separate groups, and why one group watched several films and TV programmes while the second group only watched two episodes of *Teachers*. One questions whether Ellsmore's research should have been entirely British (there were 3 non-British films, although the British element was more emphasised).

Robertson (1995) analysed the emotional investment of female pre-service teachers focusing on particular scenes in films, which depicted teaching. Robertson hypothesised that 'images of teaching are used as screens'. She used a psychoanalytical framework for her study. Views from the pre-service teachers were recorded in writing while watching the films. Robertson analysed their journals, and transcripts of interviews to trace the students' desires, longings, and fears through the repetitions of words, phrases, and ideas. These demonstrated aspects of their teacher identity linked to emotions, so could be argued as an emotional identity in the role of a teacher.

Aside from the research studies carried out above, a series of review articles were published together by Buckingham (2008) funded by the MacArthur Foundation, to archive the best reviews and research into the use of media in education. The working hypothesis was that those immersed in new digital tools are engaged in an exploration of language, games and social interaction including a diverse form of learning. This is thought to be reflected in expressions of identity. Therefore, the focus of each chapter was to explore changes in media ecology and important implications for learning. Buckingham documents the way identity has been explored in different disciplines linked to media. He moves onto sociology dating back to the 1970s focusing on youth subcultures. Buckingham quotes ideas from Jenkins (2004) who argues that identity is not fixed but is a social process, a similar thread running through my research: a relationship between one's identity and society's constant shifts in the search

for continuity and stability. This supports my ideas of social phenomenon and construction. Buckingham also draws on Goffman (1959) as identity as a performance, including the 'back stage' and 'front stage' self. This is an important notion to be aware of because each teacher's narrative will possibly have moments of both, possible narrative slips. Only the narrator may know, or think they know, which they are presenting; it can be difficult for the research to ascertain what the message from the narrative really is. Buckingham's discussion of 'identity politics' was an important aspect in being mindful of in terms of focus groups, something which I employed into the final stage of my research. This is about transforming at the level of the group rather than the individual. There are, however, criticisms of this idea such as generalising particular members of the group therefore assigning a single identity to a group of individuals which, as Buckingham puts it, 'runs the risk of fixing identity'. This supports my reasons for hesitating in categorising my teachers in terms of identity too early as it goes against the concept of identity being fluid.

Studies which I can draw from in some respects but concentrate on the researchers reviewing teachers in films include Crume (1988) who studied films about high school teachers. The films, however, were specifically chosen as those watched by adolescent viewers, not by teachers. Giroux (1993) wrote a critique of what he considered to be *powerful* movies. These were not teacher-based but did have a few examples of teacher films such as *Dead Poets Society*. Trier (2001) also writes at length about the cinematic depiction of teachers' lives in films.

### Where my research is positioned

The examples of research I have come across on teacher identity and/or media images of teachers are often framed by the researcher. Although all valuable in understanding roles of teachers and educational issues teachers may face in their career, very few have explored the opinions teachers have of teacher images in media from their perspective whilst reflecting on their own professional teacher identity.

Firstly, my research was open to any stories that teachers wish to share with me in relation to their careers, experiences and opinions within the teaching profession in order to illuminate aspects of their professional teacher identity. Thus, my research draws on teachers' views through their narrated stories and memories of those films. The films or TV programmes chosen to discuss were entirely the teachers' preference. Although based in the UK, influences can come from any other country as media exposes us to a global diet, so I did not highlight British media, but rather the images the teachers involved in my study felt resonated in their memories linked to them as a teacher. These are not only state school examples but also a mixture of private and grammar.

Secondly, in terms of the sample, secondary school teachers from various stages in their career were interviewed. As part of my findings I was able to explore if there are overlapping themes across all stages of a teaching career but my ultimate aim was to tell the story of the individual teachers' identities, not the sample as a collective.

Thirdly, for my methodology, I decided to use the first interview as a rapport-building interview while also allowing a platform for teachers to share some stories with me based on their reasons for becoming a teacher, and where they believed their career trajectory may follow. I also explored teachers' memories of teaching in the exploratory phase of my methodology, as well as their individual motivations for becoming a teacher. This meant that media was not brought immediately into the interviews, rather the ability to tell a story was explored first of all. Images of teachers were also shared and teachers were able to talk freely about what ideas sprung to their mind (not necessarily media images). There was a flexible structure employed to the interviews especially in the



first interview to set up the ideal story-telling foundation necessary for the slightly more structured second interview where media images were spoken about in more detail. The first wave of interviews was therefore regarded as an exploratory phase using an open and flexible approach. The two interviews lasted just over an hour each, plus a final focus group interview of one and a half hours, therefore generating a wealth of data. I had a set of themes that I believed would emerge (apriori themes), but added themes as they began to emerge post-interviews (post-priori themes), therefore my themes were not fixed.

Fourthly, for the analysis of my findings, categories may be set up to establish common themes, but initially I was interested in teachers understanding their self, or professional teacher identity, through their narratives.

Lastly, my research has been heavily focused on teachers in popular media and its influence on teachers' professional identity using film, television programmes (drama and reality documentaries) with some use of photos during the interview, but little cross-referencing numerous other artefacts such as those explored by Weber and Mitchell, nor gauging the responses from children in addition to teacher responses. My research is wholly about the teachers' reflections, responses, and stories they wish to share with me rather than my interpretation of various media. My research uniquely addresses teachers' thoughts on the reality documentaries that have recently emerged based on teachers and schools, many of which have been based in the UK. This would be a first in terms of understanding teachers' identities through images of teachers in reality TV programmes.

This chapter has elaborated on the research background to my study including research on media, media linked to professional teacher identity and literature on professional teacher identity. The purpose of the literature review was to define these areas including gaps or problems that my research could address. I will now discuss my theoretical framework, which will contribute to the Methodology in the chapter that follows.

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## 4. Methodology

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For the purpose of my research, the individual stories were treated as unique and separate from one another. The teachers' lives are likely to be documented across different schools, although they happen to currently work in the same school at the moment. Therefore, this research was regarded as ethnographic, life-history research using narrative methods. I am interested in the phenomenon of how media can be used as a stimulus to explore teachers' professional identities. Stake discusses cases revealing a story, whereas I am interested in stories revealing a phenomenon, and with these findings a theoretical framework should emerge.

This research was based in one school in London, but the research was not specifically about the school but rather the personal stories, or narratives, from each individual teacher to establish their professional teacher identity along with the impact media may have on these identities. It was therefore not intended for the findings of this study to represent the school as a case. Hence, this research is not about the school, but the individual teachers, and so will not be referred to as a case study. I can understand how this stance could be argued otherwise as one could compare the different teachers' stories seeing how they are similar and distinctive. The study could also reflect identities of other teachers in the same or similar school, although this would be a gross generalisation. Thus, my research is not intended for the teachers to be the case as each individual involved in my research was unique in terms of subject, age, experiences and responsibilities, to name but a few. As a result, categorising the teachers in groups or as a case would be almost impossible due to the unique quality of each teacher and the stories they shared. As Stake has described (1994:19) in *Qualitative Inquiry*, 'not everything is a case'. The teachers can be classified as a case but the focus on my research is the teachers' professional identities using media as a stimulus. Each story will therefore lack the specificity and boundedness to be called a case. Stake draws similar conclusions about a doctor being a case because his 'doctoring' will also lack specificity and boundedness (p236). Stake refers to case studies

as specific but, more so, a 'functioning specific' and Smith (1978) refers to case studies as a 'bounded system'. Each individual may be in the teaching profession but they are not all the same type of teacher with the same roles, hence lacking the boundedness Smith states so cannot be a 'functioning specific'. The teachers all work at the same school, but for some it has not been the only place of work or their only profession, so again lacking boundedness and a 'functioning specific'. I do understand the value of using case studies in education research for developing theory especially as Bassey (1999) identifies case studies to enables one in theory-seeking, story-telling, picture-drawing and evaluation which are areas my research does employ.

As yet, there is little research on how media influences teacher identity or can be used as a stimulus by which teachers reflect on their professional teacher identities (Buckingham, 1987; Weber and Mitchell, 1995; Ellsmore, 2008; Buckingham, 2008). This research has emerged from methods previously carried out by Ben-Peretz (1995) and Ben-Peretz and McCulloch (2013). Ben-Peretz and McCulloch (2013) describe veteran teachers as familiar in all schools and in everyone's imagination, especially memories of when they were in school. Veteran teachers are an idealised part of any school. This was a particularly important piece of work in the early stages of my research especially as my initial target sample were veteran teachers. Mr Chips, for example, has been considered a dominant cultural image of veteran teachers as from the 1920s this particular image, and similar, reflect emerging professional teacher identities. Such images have also been regarded as those that would stand firm against contemporary educational and social change.

Ben-Peretz (1995) also explored how teachers had learned from their experiences using their personal memory as a mode for revealing how teaching experience can transform into professional wisdom. This was explored through veteran teachers' stories. Ben-Peretz explained how specific teaching beliefs can link to classroom events. Memories in narrative are usually discussed in relation to what one's professional identity was, hence discussing the past to make sense of the present, and

also future trajectories. Cole (2010) and Plummer (2001) have also been influential in this current research in relation to the use of narrative research methods. Weber and Mitchell (1995), Ellsmore (2005) and Buckingham (2008) have also been important to this research with their particular interests in identity, and the influence media plays in its construction.

This current research includes consideration of opinions from a variety of teachers who were from different backgrounds, have different types of teaching experiences, teach different subjects and have different levels of responsibilities, although all teaching in the same school. The broad range of participants stemmed from my original research ideas, which originally was to compare opinions of veteran with novice teachers. The manner in which this developed from my original ideas is explained in more detail in the section that follows.

## Research Design

### **Setting**

This research was conducted in my own school, a girls' comprehensive secondary school in London, with a mixed sixth form from 2012 to 2014. 17 teachers were interviewed in depth for the research, twice each, concluding with 7 of them for focus group interviews.

### **Sample**

To put this research into context, I initially wanted to only explore mid-experienced or veteran teachers understanding their experience and memories linked to their professional teacher identity. A comparison with novice teachers was also part of the original research design but the question, which arose, was what the boundaries were for where a novice teacher ends and a veteran teacher begins. One could define a veteran teacher as one who has had 15 or more years of experience. However, due to challenges of making clear definitions agreed by all, for my final sample it was practical not to attempt to define each but open my sample to a variety of experienced teachers, followed by unpicking overlapping themes with similar groups of teachers, such as years of experience or types of responsibilities.

After establishing that my sample would involve a variety of teachers, an email was sent out to the school staff requesting further volunteers. This followed the pilot interviews and discussion with the Headteacher. This is considered an opportunistic sample. Over the two-year period, the sample did alter for various reasons, such as teachers not being able to commit to the research due to time constraints, and teachers leaving the school either due to resignations or maternity leave. 2013-14 saw the highest turn-around at the school affecting the sample of teachers who were involved in the research. This research used two in-depth interviews with 17 of my colleagues, finally ending up with 7 colleagues for my focus group interviews. Of the initial 17 teachers, 4 were unable to continue due to outside commitments and time constraints, 5 teachers resigned by the end of this research, and 2 were on maternity leave during the latter stages of the data collection, but returned

to be part of this section of the study. 13 teachers were involved in this research from the start until the end. All of the participants were colleagues at my place of work (see implications of insider research at the end of this chapter). Of the 13 teachers, 8 were female, and 5 were male. The sample included 1 member of the senior leadership team, and 1 ex-primary school teacher who now works in the school as a Deputy of Inclusion in the SEN department without any teaching responsibilities. 4 of the teachers do not have any middle-leader responsibilities (head of a department/subject, second in department and deputy head of year) with 1 of these teachers being fairly new to their teaching career (who completed an NQT year in 2014); 3 of the teachers obtained their teaching qualifications from abroad; 3 participants were Science teachers; 2 teachers taught Humanities subjects; 2 teachers were in the Art/Drama department, 4 teachers were in the Design Technology faculty; and 1 teacher was in the English Department (See individual character profiles below including those who did not continue throughout).

#### **The Teachers** (*names below are pseudonyms*)

1. **Joanne** was a teacher of Art and also a Deputy Head of Year for Year 11. She was teaching at the school for 7 years. She went straight into teaching after university via the GTP route. She left to go on maternity leave after Easter 2014. She has moved to Bristol with her partner and child, and had resigned. Joanne's partner is also a teacher at a Sixth Form College.
2. **Anne** teaches in the school as a science teacher. She works part-time due to family commitments outside of work. She has taught at the school for 11 years. Anne went straight into teaching after completing an Open University PGCE. She has no whole-school responsibilities but has worked on smaller projects around the school such as support for specific groups of students and literacy in science.
3. **Mark** had taught at the school for 5 years. He taught in the drama department, but then changed his path to include teaching lessons in the SEN department, which could include English and Maths lessons. He had previously worked in theatres exploring directing for a

short time and then applied for a GTP through a newspaper advertisement. He resigned from the school in December 2014.

4. **Michelle** is originally from Germany where the school system is very different to the UK. She moved to the UK to 'follow her heart', a primary school teacher, who she later married. He is a primary school teacher. She worked as an au pair initially and then taught at a primary school. However, her role as a class teacher quickly diminished and she works as the deputy in charge of the SEN department. Prior to her maternity leave during the mid-portion of the research, she was also a Deputy Head of Year which she left behind after returning, taking on further responsibilities in the SEN department. Michelle has never felt she wanted to return to the classroom. She has taught at the school for 10 years.
5. **Ben** had been teaching at the school for 6 years as a teacher of History, and also Government and Politics for which he was in charge of the Sixth Form. He resigned in summer 2014.
6. **Hilary** taught in the English and Media department for just over a year. She was long-term supply. She resigned in March 2014. She has had 4 years of teaching experience.
7. **\*Renee** is the Head of Careers and PSE. She contributed well to the first phase interview but did not manage to commit to all phases of the research. She had been teaching in the school for over 15 years.
8. **\*Denise** is the Head of PE and teaching at the school for a little over 13 years. She was part of the pilot interviews but did not manage to commit to all phases of the research
9. **\*Brian** is the Head of Science and has been teaching at the school for 15 years. He was part of the pilot interviews but did not manage to commit to all phases of the research.
10. **\*Elaine** is a teacher of English and in charge of Key Stage 3 English. She was part of the pilot interviews but did not manage to commit to all phases of the research.

**\*Teachers 7-10 could not commit to the entire study.**

### Teachers involved throughout my research, including the focus group

1. **Martin** has taught at the school for 9 years where he is in charge of ICT. He previously worked in the IT industry/ private sector prior to teaching as a web developer and database manager. Martin's partner is a primary school teacher. He started as an RE teacher for two years, but later moved into IT based on his experience rather than his Masters in Philosophy and Ethics. Martin is in charge of Key Stage 4 and 5 IT which is part of the Faculty of Technology, although he still runs the ICT area for the faculty. Martin has taught in the same school from being an NQT back in 2006.
2. **Jo** has taught in the school since 2012. She is a teacher in the Science department who was born in China and moved to Canada when she was very young. She has taught as a supply teacher for Science, but has also taught English as an additional language to students in Japan prior to this. She is currently covering a colleague on maternity leave as acting Head of Chemistry. This is her first permanent teaching post in the UK. Prior to this she was supply teaching in various schools in the UK. She has been qualified to teach for 4 years.
3. **Matt** is a Geography, RE and Travel and Tourism teacher. He had been promoted to Deputy Head of Year 10 in 2012 and then to Head of Year in 2013. Matt completed two years as a PVE (Preventing Violent Extremism) coordinator prior to this. He has been teaching at the school after his NQT year for 7 years. His mother has been a teacher at the same school in various capacities (Head of Year, Head of Department, and teacher of English) but had recently dropped all duties to work in the SEN department. The two of them now work together with Matt as Head of Year 7 and his mother as Deputy Head of Year 7. Matt's wife is also a teacher (primary phase).
4. **Drew** has been teaching for 12 years in the school but left briefly to do supply teaching after being promoted to second in department; the stress of the added responsibilities



became overwhelming. She however returned once she did supply work at some very difficult schools and an opportunity arose to return back as a full-time technology teacher.

5. **Clarence** was the Deputy in charge of Design and Technology. He was teaching at the school for 6 years. He resigned in summer 2014 but returned for the focus group interview in September 2014. He resigned as he wanted to pursue work in technology and did not see teaching as a long-term career. However, on arriving back to work for the focus group interview he did admit to missing teaching.
6. **Walt** is a Science teacher who has just completed his NQT year at the school in 2014. He also completed the first placement for his PGCE at the same school, applying for a vacancy in June 2013. He had no responsibilities during this research, but had applied for a couple roles of responsibility in the school. He was educated in Ireland before moving to the UK to complete his PGCE. On completion of this research Walt had successfully been accepted as Head of PSE starting June 2015.
7. **Erin** is a Food Technology teacher who has taught for just over 11 years at the school. She became second in charge of the Design Technology Department and then Head of Department soon after. She was then promoted to Assistant Head and is now Acting Deputy Head in charge of Teaching and Learning, and CPD for the school. Prior to teaching she worked with a research team focusing on food ethics, but she mostly enjoyed the teaching element.

## Methods

In this section of the research design, I will be discussing my methods as outlined in the table below.

This consisted of five phases. With each of these phases I will be expanding on the methods I employed and the purpose of these phases and methods linked back to key pieces of literature. Following this, I will describe the methods of analysis I used for these phases.

<b>Phase</b>	<b>Methods used</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Date Conducted</b>
Pilot Study for individual interviews	Semi-structured open-ended questions Images timelines	Establish questions to take forward to the exploratory phase. Assess the effectiveness of the images and timelines.	2012
Individual Interview 1 – the exploratory phase	Semi-structured open-ended questions Images of teachers (general) Timeline drawings	Establish a comfortable narrative between teacher and researcher. Structure questions for the media-focused interview. Establish initial findings about each teacher's professional identity.	2013
Individual Interview 2 – media-focused interview	Semi-structured questions Images of teachers from media	Establish further findings about how media influences teachers' professional identities. Explore teacher's opinions of teacher images in media.	2013
Focus Group (NQT pilot)	Emerging findings from interview 1 and 2 restructured into questions	Rehearse the structure of the final focus group discussion using the findings that emerged from the first individual interviews. Decide how much involvement I would have during the final focus group discussion. Establish which findings would generate rich data, and which would not.	2014
Final Focus Group Discussion	Emerging findings from interview 1 and 2 restructured into questions Small focus group discussion Open final discussion as a whole group	Verify the validity of my findings. Confirm or disprove overlapping themes across each teacher. Analyse interactions and responses between teachers, identifying changes or maintenance of opinions from individual interviews.	2014

**Table 1: Outline of Research Design**

### The Pilot Study

To inform my final method, a pilot study was conducted in 2011 over the course of a month. Six participants were initially chosen from the department I work in (Science) to form my pilot study and one history teacher and PE teacher. Each participant was interviewed. Some of the teachers who participated in the pilot study formed part of my main sample in my final piece of field work, especially if their stories contributed to the understanding of my research questions.

The pilot interviews gave opportunity for the participants to discuss several examples of teacher images in different types of media whilst also reflecting on their own identity. Based on my experience of the pilot interviews I was able to tailor the final interview questions further so teacher images referenced by the original sample of teachers were incorporated. The early pilot interviews included teachers drawing themselves, their favourite teacher and their least favourite teacher. Drawings have been researched before (Weber and Mitchell, 1995) in relation to teacher identity, which could form a research thesis in its own right. However, the response to drawing during the interview sometimes became the focus rather than the expected narrative about their professional teacher identity. Some teachers also refused to draw or became silent while drawing. Thus, this usually ground their narratives to a standstill hence I moved away from this to the timeline drawings. The timelines allowed more narration to be conveyed as the teachers talked through their timeline. As only one teacher was an Art teacher in my sample, the concentration from the non-artistic teachers with the drawing meant fewer findings could be documented during the original drawing task.

### Narrative Research Methods

As the focus of this research was the teachers' narratives using media as a stimulus, the research method I employed were narrative research methods. Narratives involve the co-construction of meanings with narrator which were semi-structured around themes established from the research questions.

Narrative research methods were useful in my research allowing teachers to make sense and order of their professional teacher identity as a messy reality. The teachers entered a meaning-making process during the interviews gradually becoming more like conversations just as Burgess (2002:102) regarded interviews as 'conversations with a purpose' which are well-suited to an unstructured and informal format. The direction the interview could finally take would depend on the individual teachers, as the stories were unique to each of them, so the interviews also gradually adapted becoming bespoke while also more enjoyable for myself and the teachers. This is clearly outlined by Webb and Webb (1932):

Bear in mind that (an interview should be) desirable to make (it) pleasing to the persons interviewed. It should seem to him or her an agreeable form of social intercourse.

(Webb and Webb, 1932:139)

Linking back to my theoretical framework 'narrative and life history research are strongly associated with moves to restore individual agency' (Bathmaker, 2010:3) as well as these stories can bring structure to our lives (Somer and Gibson, 1994) while Goodson and Sikes (2001) believe that through talking about one's life, we can make sense of what has happened to us. Teachers negotiated their identities as part of a meaning-making process from personal experiences (Riessman, 2008) as 'we know or discover ourselves...by the stories we tell' (Lieblich et al., 1998:7). As my research is focused on teachers' identities, such methods only seem fitting especially as I wish for the research to be based on the stories that teachers share with me.

### Rationale

The following section of this chapter will explore my rationale behind using narrative research methods, timelines and focus group discussions.

Elliot (2005) outlines the common themes that can emerge from studies using narrative research methods including lived experiences, empowering participants, understanding processes and change over time, understanding self and representations of the self, and the awareness of researchers as

narrators. My research focuses on understanding representations of the 'self', based on media influences. Narratives and storytelling can be difficult to escape; at many points of our lives we have a 'narrative moment'. Ideally the terms 'narratives' and 'storytelling' should be synonymous and, much like Gilbert (2002) I do find myself alternating between these two terms. These stories can be understood by the way 'events are selected from the past' along with the creation of a 'temporal ordering'. Although the latter term seems more appropriate for areas of psychology, the ordering and meaning-making starts internally, prior to be articulated. However, these stories do not have to be voiced:

Even when we try to escape narrative as when we listen to music or do mathematics, we tend to lapse. Even logicians tell stories. Humankind cannot bear very much abstraction or discursive reasoning. The stories of our days and the stories in our days are joined in that autobiography where we are all engaged in making and remaking, as long as we live.

(Hardy, 1975:4)

As discussed, narratives are a means of making sense of lives and organising experiences. This can establish meaning and structure for us, but also gives the storyteller a stronger sense of agency (defined in the previous chapter). The value of narratives is well documented. Gilbert (2002) discusses this agency as beneficial when coping with grief, emphasising the strength of narratives. Narratives as a means of organising ideas and thoughts, was discussed by Bruner (1990). Harvey, Stein and Scott (1995), and Ellis and Bochner (1992) also documented the value of narrative research methods. The teachers I am talking to may not be recovering from a Normandy invasion or dealing with abortion as described in these research studies, but it is evident how widely applied storytelling can be. Teachers will, without doubt go through a variety of changes in their teaching career, sometimes unpredictably so. Change of any sort can be a catalyst for instability in teachers' identities (Goodson and Sikes, 2001; Day et al., 2007). Making sense of these changes through narratives can therefore be therapeutic in some way for the teachers involved. However, one must not ignore that the narratives can be altered from their initial experience (Gilbert, 2002) in order to make their stories clearer to the researcher

who is interviewing them. One must be aware of this as a researcher; although part of the meaning-making may be for the teachers' own benefit, the narrative may be changed to enable listeners to understand the messages conveyed.

Aside from meaning-making, the narrator (teacher) is also establishing social connections, an aspect relevant to my research; different types of media may be influencing teachers' identities, pedagogy and practice. When the teachers are creating their stories, they are seeing their world through these stories (Gilbert, 2002). My argument is that media may alter perceptions of this 'world' resulting in teachers creating narratives to fit that 'world'. The 'world' of the media could, therefore, be affecting the telling of these stories. Bruner (1990) claims that we learn about our social positioning and society through our narratives, but the opposite relationship can also be true. Gilbert (2002) uses the example of children's stories influencing one's morals, and behaviour. Linked to my research, media could be doing similar, influencing teachers in specific ways. Therefore, narratives could be a social act, and could be influenced by social acts linking back to identities being established and maintained (Rosenwald & Ochberg, 1992).

My research, nevertheless, was a snapshot of the moment that a particular story is shared, and I must remind myself that these stories may be different each time the story is told. This does not make the findings less valid, but the point of narrative research in my opinion is to not be valid but to communicate the teachers' stories as they are told. A narrative can have multiple views on the same event and each one has an element of truth to it (Reissman, 1993). For the teacher, the story makes sense and has meaning to them in that moment. It is important to keep the original meaning but as a researcher, I filtered the information as it related to my research questions. It was important to revisit the teachers if there are areas that need to be re-examined for new information to be gained and misconceptions addressed. According to Gilbert (2002) personal narratives are ongoing and evolving and this is openly acknowledged. I must admit that knowing the teachers ahead of carrying out this research has been an advantage, allowing a flow in conversation and storytelling. Listening more and interrupting less has also resulted in richer data. However, Reissman (1993) claims that simply

listening can also change the narrator's story, and this is of course true because I have presented a platform for teachers to voice their stories, which is not a natural situation to be involved in. There are many issues associated with narrative research which must be taken into account, but being a teacher talking to teachers has given me a better understanding of each teacher's narrative as opposed to being an outside researcher, or a researcher who is not a teacher:

A social insider is better positioned as a researcher because of his/her knowledge of the relevant patterns of social interaction required for gaining access and making meaning.

Shah (2004:556)

Apart from being aware of my role as a researcher, one has to be aware of the issues linked to being the teacher narrating their stories. Goodson's work on developing narrative theory outlines that not everyone is a practised narrator and consequently there may be a spectrum of narratives which we as researchers need to be aware of prior to carrying out our own narrative research (Goodson, 2013). As Goodson stated (2013:128) narrative repertoires 'can assist in navigating change and transition in our lives'. Not everyone will reflect and refine their narratives in the same way, and through different stages in our lives, our ways of recounting and retelling our stories will change. Goodson gives the examples of old age as showing clear variations in narrative capacity and describes how a colleague of his felt with age his identity was in 'free fall' and as a result they were losing control of their life story (2013:66). Goodson is therefore linking the ability to narrate in a particular way, with the formation of one's identity or the changing or altering of an identity. He calls this an 'identity project' which will involve several stages depending on the type of narrator you may be. He discusses that if one has no control over narrating their life story then there is an expected lack of control of one's own self-identity. Subsequently, the ability to narrate is also linked to learning and agency according to Goodson. He assesses the narratives for their openness and closed qualities as well as how the narrative form relates to how people become an agent in thinking forward about courses of action and learning strategies to use in their lives. A narrative can therefore be a commanding voice for some and heavily involved in one's decision making, but also a source of inspiration including how one

behaves in society, and how their actions are informed. Hoggart (1990) describes this capacity to 'theorise' and 'locate' as essential to respond to life's ever-changing events. Narratives need to therefore be highly flexible especially, as Bauman emphasises, with the 'unprecedented, fluidity, fragility and in-built transience' of social conditions (2003:91).

Goodson's spectrum of narrativity (2013) describes four main narrative characters although there may be more categories that emphasise these differences in narrative identity. This brings to light issues I may have in noting a professional teacher identity in my research if there is a narrative identity also. Could the narrative identity mask professional teachers' identities? Categories have been used before to identify types of narratives. Plummer (2001: 45) suggested some types of life stories which could be 'long', 'short', 'comprehensive', 'topical', 'edited', 'naturalistic', 'researched' and 'reflexive', however, it is 'rare these days to encounter a life story that exists in one of these pure forms' (Plummer, 2001:45). Goodson's four major categories include *Scripted Describers* who build their descriptions around a role and this contextual stability is an important. They tend to have closed patterns of narrativity, and can be ill-equipped for the social changes. *Armchair elaborators* is another category. They are highly reflexive and narratively intense life storytellers. Reflexivity is mentioned by Goodson as it is an important component of narrativity. He discusses an 'integrated narrative' or what Goodson sometimes calls 'internal conversations' that may be evident in self-representation which is 'reflexively understood by the person in terms of her or his biography' (1991:53). Nias (1985:106) also writes about the self as a 'social yet reflexive product', and Callero (2003) offers a notion of identity whereby 'the conceptualisation of the self as an embodied agent...requires an appreciation of the reflexive process of a social self'. *Multiple Describers* are narrators who move between roles and identities that are bound by society. Their life stories are based on 'externally generated, socially provided scripts' that 'fit a particular moment in history' (Goodson, 2013:94). The final category in the spectrum of narrativities are the *focussed elaborators* who break away from established patterns of socialisation. They are heavily involved in what Goodson describes at several points as the 'process of



becoming', which I assume is identity construction thus during interviews, the researcher may witness a 'new self' emerging. These narrators are therefore well-equipped for rapid changes within society. Suoto-Manning (2012:3) highlights the importance of society on our narratives including ideas that neutral words do not exist but are a part of the fabric of society. These notions are supported by Bakhtin:

... there are no "neutral" words and forms – words and forms that can belong to "no one;"  
... language is not an abstract system of normative forms ... As a living, socio-ideological concrete thing ... [t]he word in language is half someone else's.

(Bakhtin, 1981:293)

What Bakhtin is implying is narratives may be formed as a result of one's understanding of self in relation to society, and the words that are used when conveying a narrative could stem from society's influence on us. In terms of society influencing narratives in my research, I looked at how teachers' narratives can evidence how the stimulus of media influenced their professional teacher identity. An example from my research included discussions about *Educating Yorkshire* (Channel 4: 2013) and *Educating Essex* (Channel 4: 2011) which were brought up quite regularly by the teachers I interviewed. Teachers wondered what a version based in this school would be like: 'it would be nothing special...those schools are two extremes...but we need teachers like in *Educating Yorkshire*...their kids are no different from ours.' Teachers were watching these forms of media and reflecting on their own teaching experience, and also the school they work in.

Depending on the manner narratives are constructed during an interview (one's narrative character), they could illuminate aspects of one's identity, or selfhood (Goodson, 2013) and also the importance society plays on our narratives. Furthermore, if the narratives demonstrate a shifting pattern, this may imply that our identities are also shifting. The categories do make sense especially the way society weaves through each type of narrator, however, I did struggle to place the teachers in my research so neatly into these categories. Many of the teachers would fit into many of the categories; there would be some overlap. Goodson does suggest there may not be a dominant

narrative type; hybrid narrators could exist. A hybrid narrator, according to Goodson, demonstrates episodic reflexivity, processes of becoming somebody and movement from an original script during periods of becoming. Nevertheless, Goodson believes a dominant style of narrative character will be adopted eventually due to a search for coherence and continuity in one's identity but there may be moments of repositioning of the self through narrative construction (re-selfing) pointing to renegotiation of a narrative character, and thus identity. This would establish a narrative journey, and although showing aspects of reflexivity, re-selfing and hybridity at that moment, the search of stability was evident in each of his case studies. This supports my ideas in previous chapters on a core identity, one that is anchored, and his research seems to suggest that there is a continuing search for this stability and a need for one's identity to be anchored.

Based on my reading of Goodson's *Developing Narrative Theory*, I must be aware there may be different types of storytellers/ narrative characters. The narratives from the teachers should reveal evidence of identity construction, negotiation and repositioning due to their perspective of their own social positioning and other variables. Some narratives will be open, some closed. Some will demonstrate high levels of reflexivity, frequently revisiting their internal narrative; others will appear to be reflecting on themselves as teachers for the first time. Each teacher may portray different narrative characters. It will then be my role to unpick the teacher identity embedded within the narrative.

Establishing one's position is a notion Bignold and Su (2013) claim is useful when allowing participants and readers to understand the perspective and context of the research they are involved in. The open nature of my interviews and my honesty with the teachers lent itself to this. Bignold and Su discuss how the researcher's narrative can be a useful strategy to reduce subjectivity and increase validity of one's findings:

Being explicit about their positionality help[s]...to gain participants' trust and [allow] readers to understand how their own positions might have influenced the research outcomes, adding to the credibility of the researcher and the validity of the research.

(2013:411)

In the next section I will discuss the three parts to my research which permitted teachers' narratives to be explored in relation to their professional teacher identity and media. These include the interviews, the use of timelines and the focus group discussion.

### **The Interviews**

The interview questions were semi-structured, and used as prompts rather than a restrictive set of questions. Responses from the teachers were therefore lengthy due to the open nature the questions were posed. Media images were used as a stimulus for discussion through all the interviews. This involved the teachers interacting with the images as a reference point in most cases. In other cases, teachers would expand on the detail they understood about the teacher image and reflect back onto their own professional teacher identity.

The phase 1 interviews were set up to find out each teacher's story of how and why they became a teacher, and influences along this journey according to them (the exploratory phase). This interview was not intended to answer my research questions yet but to establish a comfortable platform for conversation between myself and the teachers (see Appendix I for phase 1 interview schedule). This also allowed to me ascertain how each teacher would respond to my questions and how detailed and personal their responses were likely to be. The first interview, therefore, was very much geared by them and their stories, and how they would like to narrate it. While they delivered their stories, I did ask each teacher to draw me a timeline. This worked to assist the narrative, which is discussed later in this section. After the phase 1 interview, the teachers were now familiar with how subsequent interviews may be structured, hence why not many teachers dropped out of the process after this interview.

The individual teacher interviews from the first and second phase lasted approximately 1 to 1½ hours. The interviews were carried out after school or when convenient for the teachers. Participants whose interviews link closely to the main themes in my research may be asked for follow-up interviews as they may reveal more linked to those themes and therefore contribute substantially to the study. Similarly, if there are any ambiguities that arise from the interviews, participants may also be called back for follow-up interviews to clarify any misconceptions on my part.

Due to time constraints, some teachers were not able to complete the first interview. These particular teachers did not proceed to the second phase of the interviews due to further time constraints but also not experiencing the full interaction that did take place during the first phase interviews. Without exception, all the teachers who fully engaged with the first interview commented on how enjoyable the process was, with one teacher calling it 'therapeutic'. The phase 1 interview was therefore set up to build the researcher-researched relationship as discussed by Pinnegar and Daynes (2007:7) who believe that '...we become narrative inquirers only when we recognise and embrace the interactive quality of the researcher-researched 'relationship'.

The findings from the first phase of interviews were used to formulate the phase 2 interview questions (the media-focused phase). All teachers were given the same set of questions but during the actual interview, some questions may have branched off linked to what the teachers had previously discussed with me during phase 1. The phase 2 interview questions were therefore a little more personalised in places, and although not apparent in the interview schedule, it was apparent in the interviews themselves. By altering the structure and my approach for the second phase, the interviews became more flexible and fluid. Much of the literature I had read in the lead up to my research has regarded identity as fluid and creative in nature (Mead, 1934), so it would only be fitting that the method used to explore identity was also fluid in nature. The interviews developed to being more conversational, and teachers more engaged in the conversation rather than a uniform style of interview schedule.

The phase 2 interviews proceeded with a presentation of images of teachers in the media (see Appendix I for phase 2 interview schedule). The images were split into two categories of fictional teachers within TV programmes and films, and teachers in reality documentaries. The images varied as much as the sample of teachers I was interviewing varied, all the way from Mr Chips to Mr Perez in *The Wire*. Books were involved in the pilot study, but not in this final interview as much more dialogue was generated by images over memories of book content. However, if a book did have an impact on a teacher, they did mention this in their interviews. This was true of three of the teachers, although one could not remember the title of the book in question. Teachers were encouraged to select images of teachers they could remember and describe them in terms of their teacher identity. They were then asked to choose images that were similar to themselves as a teacher, prompting reflection on their own identity. Automatically generated were their opinions and feelings towards the images of teachers in media, including whether the representations reflected the reality of teaching. The same structure applied when presented with images of teachers from reality documentaries.

My research is therefore based on the narratives shared by these teachers. A text can be narrative in nature if there is sequence and consequence where events are selected, organised, connected and evaluated as meaningful for a particular audience (Reissman, 1993). Within my research, teachers are making sense of their experiences while also claiming an identity (Langellier, 2001). Within sociological circles, it is common for long sections of text/talk to encompass personal narrative. These are 'extended accounts of lives in context that develop over the course of ... multiple interviews' (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000:430).

### **Timelines**

Timelines (see Appendix IV for examples) were used in my research as a visual representation of teachers' life history chronologically leading up to their career in teaching, as well as their future aspirations. They were used as a methodological approach in the exploratory phase to put the teachers at ease, allowing their narratives to be communicated more easily. These timelines were also

used to facilitate personal memories and sequencing of specific events linked to the teachers' professional identities. Similar to Berends (2011), benefits have been evident combining both aural and visual data whereby transcripts have been cross-referenced with the timeline drawing to observe where the two match or contradict each other. Taking part in an in-depth interview provides an opportunity to construct a narrative representing one's self, while taking part in a 'performative exchange rather than merely providing a factual account of their experiences' (Berends, 2011:1). Therefore, the incorporation of timelines and aural interviews can allow 'the voice of the participant to be heard'. Butler (1997) and Schwandt (2007) also support this standpoint. Talking through and constructing timelines can provide a platform for meaning-making for what can seem like a great amount of memories to gather in a short space of time. As Denzin and Lincoln outline, these methods of data collection are 'ways of forging connections between human existence and visual perception' (2003:51) but also help individuals construct meaning to memories which they may find difficult to express in word (Rhodes & Fitzgerald, 2006), or might have not considered as important prior to a narrative interview (Banks, 2007). A narrative interview is both relational and interactional so the context, and the meaning attached to the context and how this narrative is constructed are interlinked (Enosh and Buchbinder, 2005). Combined with the timeline drawings, described as 'a representational anchor' (Guenette and Marshall, 2009:87), can facilitate the process of story-telling for the participant but also a probe between the teacher and researcher as a 'touch point for further and deeper reflection' (Guenette and Marshall, 2009:87). Krizek (2003:143) also believes that timelines can provide opportunities for identities to be 'revealed in personal narratives'.

Timelines are therefore popular tools in life-history research (Thomas and O'Kane, 1998), and can help to make sense of past experiences. Deacon regards timelines as a participatory technique of communication as they are 'simple and easy ways to organise and analyse the impact of context on current life' (2006:103). O'Sullivan et al. (2009) used timelines in educational settings to understand the impact of PE teachers' experiences on their choice to become a PE teacher. This method of using

timelines also revealed aspects of their identity, which can contribute to answering my research questions.

The timeline drawings took place midway through the teachers' aural narrative interviews. The conversations were audio recorded so they could be transcribed later. All teachers spoke through their timeline drawings but some spoke more than others. Teachers were also asked to identify points that impacted or influenced them in the lead up to them becoming a teacher.

### **The Focus Group**

I conducted a focus group interview following the two phases of individual interviews (the exploratory phase and the media-focused phase) rather than at the beginning of my research. The focus group took place in the room where I teach rather than a room familiar to any of the teachers. The teachers were given snacks as it was the end of the working day, and this also worked to create a sociable atmosphere for discussion. The discussion lasted for 40 minutes in smaller focus groups, and a further 30 minutes as a whole-group discussion.

The results from the individual interviews and focus group will have its limitations in terms of generalising the findings to a population, so therefore will not represent the wider population of teachers, but is representative of the demographics of these specific teachers in this particular school. To reference Kreuger (1994) I am not carrying out this research to infer, generalise, or make statements but 'to provide insights into how people perceive a situation' which in my research are teachers who have one thing in common – the school they work in.

### **Prior to focus group discussion:**

I provided the teachers with statements initial findings and potential questions linked to these findings, based on the first two phases of interviews I had with the teachers individually. The questions were open-ended questions to encourage universal participation with the group (Parker & Tritter, 2006), and as a result a 'synergy' should occur whereby all the teachers were equipped to contribute

to the discussion in some way (Kitzinger, 1994). This did generate a 'momentum... [allowing]...underlying opinions, meanings, feelings, attitudes and beliefs to emerge alongside descriptions of individual experiences' (Parker & Tritter, 2006). The findings handed to the focus group were headed under different themes linked to my original literature review and findings after the first two phases of interviews.

#### Identity:

1. When watching teachers in popular media, teachers will automatically reflect on their own professional identity – Do teachers in popular media influence teachers to reflect on their own professional identity?
2. Teachers today are not influenced by elite, traditional educators/images of teachers, therefore these images are not as strong and resilient as described by Harry Judge (1995) [describes dominant images of teachers as powerful in the public imagination and now placed in a pedagogical museum] – Why are traditional and elite educators not as powerful and influential as they may have been e.g. Mr Chips? This particular question could highlight the specific culture of the school, not only the individual opinions of the teachers. This will depend on how overlapping the comments are on this particular area.
3. Teachers in films and on TV are caricatures of real teachers, and cannot be taken seriously – How can teachers be portrayed in realistic manner?
4. Some teachers in films and on TV can be inspiring and something to work towards – How can teachers in popular media inspire future teachers?

#### Feelings about teachers in media:

1. Most teachers get frustrated watching reality documentaries about teachers – Why do teachers have strong feelings about reality documentaries about teaching? There was a clear emotional rather than rational response to teachers who watched reality documentaries



about teachers, or drama series such as Waterloo Road where the image of a teacher was described often as a 'caricature'.

2. Teachers get bad press so TV and film are the only means of demonstrating how hard teachers work – Is popular media a medium to demonstrate the realities about teaching?

Intentions of media:

1. TV programmes and films with teachers are not thinking about teachers as an audience, and therefore are not made to inform but entertain – What are the intentions of programme makers when producing programmes about teachers and teaching?
2. TV programmes and films with teachers depict the relationships between teachers and students more strongly than pedagogy and practice – Why are teacher-student relationships been depicted more frequently in popular media?

Other influences:

1. Not many teachers immediately choose their teacher training as influential to their teaching career - How influential is teacher training (i.e. tutorials/lectures)? Would it be beneficial to incorporate popular media into teacher training?

### **During the focus group discussion**

The teachers were split into smaller groups, initially based on power relations. There was an intended combination of teachers in positions of leadership within departments, members of the senior leadership team, teachers with pastoral responsibilities, and teachers with no responsibilities. Both smaller focus group conversations were recorded independent of each other. The groups consisted of the following teachers:

#### Group 1:

- Martin
- Clarence
- Matt

- Erin

#### Group 2:

- Jo
- Walt
- Drew

Finally, the teachers were brought together for a whole-group discussion to summarise points discussed on the findings. This was also recorded. Kreuger (1993) refers to 'piggyback' focus groups which is a group set up as part of an already scheduled meeting. Based on this idea, the focus group interview was initially carried out with a group of NQTs prior to the final focus groups outlined above. The findings of this can also be analysed, but also allowed me to assess any issues with the structure and timings for the final focus group discussion.

#### Rationale behind conducting the focus group discussion

I decided to use a focus group of participants at the end of the data collection so as not to influence opinions in individual interviews, and choosing to conduct a focus group interview as an additional strand to my data collection to focus on specific areas of my research. It served to verify some of my findings attempting to clarify how accurate and valid some of the data are. Carrying out the focus group interview at the end of my research also eliminated the chance of the participants repeating what others have said in the focus group interviews if conducted prior to the individual interviews. Focus groups can elicit multiple views. Focus groups in social science research has become more established and accepted (Merton & Kendall, 1946; Merton et al., 1956) especially due to the ease of generating rich qualitative data in a short space of time compared to traditional methods (Parker & Tritter, 2006), and is one of the main reasons I used this as a method of data collection rather than returning back to each teacher to discuss my findings.

The focus group gave an opportunity for the teachers to discuss specific topics which could bring to light underlying issues which may have a common theme across all the teachers involved (Bloor et al., 2001). These could be specific beliefs or values. The focus group also gave me an opportunity to explore areas that I did not ask in the first and second wave of interviews, which could possibly be emerging findings. These ideas are supported by Wilkinson (2004:177) who describes such interviews as 'a window on participant's lives or their underlying beliefs and opinions' which can be based on a series of questions called the focus group 'schedule' which would include much of the questions in the first part of this report.

Another reason behind using a focus group discussion in my research is supported by Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) who state that 'the most common purpose of a focus group interview is for an in-depth exploration of a topic about which little is known'. At present, there is little known about how the media can influence teacher identity, especially in the UK.

It was likely that the focus group may not be the complete set of participants; a core group was selected from the original group who were individuals that contributed more effectively to my research questions. Choosing the teachers for the focus group was not an ad hoc process (Parker & Tritter, 2006). The focus group was established at the end of my research 'not to infer but to understand, not to generalize but to determine the range, not to make statements about the population but to provide insights into how people perceived a situation' (Krueger, 1994:3). Some may argue that it may have been interesting to document data going against my research questions also, but this could be an extension of my research rather than part of this research at this point in time. It is important that discussion can be generated between the teachers involved so basing my choice and groupings on certain commonalities with each other seemed logical, however not completing overlapping in opinions otherwise potential areas of debate may not have arisen.

It was interesting to observe the interactions the participants had with each other, and also noting specific areas that participants chose to leave out when compared to their individual

interviews. Some sources have discussed that focus groups work well when members of the group do not know each other and they are more likely to be frank and open with people that they do not know than with friends or colleagues (Goodson and Sikes, 2001; Wilkinson, 2004). However, my research has been carried out with teachers from the same school so this is an issue which I needed to work around and the structure of my focus group was pivotal in preventing any awkward situations which could arise as a result of the teachers knowing each other in different capacities. As the research was based in a setting familiar to each other teachers, this focus group was productive in the sense of jogging each other's memory about similar or contrasting experiences or perceptions (Sikes and Goodson, 2001). I used these areas in common to my advantage. Parker and Tritter (2006) agree that a focus group is usually set up due to commonalities between the participants involved. The structure of the focus group could be refined further, adopting similar methods to Sikes and Troyna (1991), working with groups in triads based on similarities and then bringing the group together to have a full-group discussion. Sikes and Troyna's reasoning was due to group members having such diverse experiences of schooling. I admittedly did feel wary of the interactions some members of the group would have due to positions people held in the group which, for instance, being more senior than others as my sample consists of NQTs to SLT members. I worried that members of the focus group may feel intimidated and not participate as they would without prior preparation. Parker & Tritter, (2006) also outline this as a potential limitation of focus groups, whereby interactions may be based on patterns of social relations. Two ideas to prevent this is to use Sikes and Troyna's pre-focus group before the whole-group discussion, and provide teachers with the findings in advance so they can start to formulate their responses prior to the focus group, to prevent passiveness.

According to Morgan (1988) focus groups should be set up as an opportunity for teachers to interact with each other rather than with the interviewer alone. Focus groups can be described as contrived in nature, but will yield insights that may not have been available in one-to-one interviews. This could be due to being exposed to others' opinions on the same issue, resulting in their own opinions surfacing which were not necessarily in their immediate thoughts prior to discussion (Arksey

& Knight, 1999). Focus groups can therefore create a greater dynamic amongst those involved more than a researcher asking a single teacher a set of questions. The researcher can, therefore, afford to take more of a peripheral role, rather than being the driving force during a focus group session. This version of the role adds a little more distance to the term 'facilitator' which has been more linked to group discussion compared to a focus group (Parker and Tritter, 2006). It is the relationship and 'inter-relational dynamics' between the participants that is therefore more important (Kitzinger, 1994; Johnson, 1996) which is very unlike the first two phases of interviews involving one teacher and the myself, the researcher. This, in contrast, did rely more heavily on the researcher-researched relationship. Focus groups will not rely on the researchers seeking answers, but seeking group interactions (Bloor et al., 2001). It is this 'dynamic nature which is at the heart of focus groups and which endows them with power to generate insight often negated by other methods' (Parker and Tritter, 2006:34). One issue that can arise in focus group interviews is that of power relations, especially as the teachers involved had different levels of experience and responsibility within the school. Power relations are thought to shape a person or group identity in terms of occupying a position, by distinguishing and treating a person or group as gendered, raced, classed, or another type of category.

As Beijaard et al. have commented: 'A teacher's professional identity is not entirely unique' (2004:122), yet being part of a group means that there may be a degree of uniformity amongst the group members' thoughts and actions (Burke & Stets, 2009). By sharing a profession in common, the teachers in my research share specific knowledge and professional skills. Thus to some certain extent teachers may have a shared professional group identity. At the same time the shared professional group identity will differ as a result of their personal memories, beliefs and experiences. Teachers are likely to differ from each other teachers in terms of level of motivation, job satisfaction, commitment or emotions. These are characteristics of their individual professional teacher identities explored in the earlier phases of my research.

It is important to outline the types of voices that the focus group may have. There can be silent voices and passive contributions in the focus group discussions. This could be due to the feeling of intimidation and disapproval from peers, or the fear of possibly deviating from stereotypical norms (Kitzinger 1994; Smithson 2000; Stokes and Bergin 2006), and some teachers in the focus group may agree with others' points where previously in individual interviews may not have (Myers 1998). There will inevitably be individuals who dominate the conversation which can further silence quieter, or more cautious members of the group (Hollander 2004). The different levels of leadership responsibilities may have an effect on the amount an individual contributes in the focus group discussion also. The same could be applied to a teacher who has a greater amount of experience in the profession (Hofmeyer & Scott, 2006). The number of years they have worked at the school can therefore establish a degree of superiority from others' perspectives about that teacher as one could assume they would have a greater depth of memory linked to the school and their professional teacher identity. Powell & Single (1996) coin this as 'occupational superiority'. The longer teachers work in a professional context, the more experience they gain and the more they are influenced by context features (Huberman, 1989). A teacher's sense of professional identity may change during the career. This suggests a distinction in professional identity profiles between teachers with different amounts of experience.

What can also make a focus group interesting is the degree of conflict and tension evident between other members of the group (Reed and Payton 1997) as well as already-established groups with hierarchies resulting in a familiarity amongst some members of the focus group (Kitzinger, 1990). Previously established power relations can therefore greatly influence group dynamics (Andrews 2006).

## **Summary**

As discussed, focus group interviews can produce a large amount of data in a short space of time which is useful in the setting that my research was carried out in; time is indeed short in the teaching profession. Across many researchers, they advise not to ask questions in turn but to encourage interactions with each other resulting in less overly-structured format. I decided that the best way to set up the focus group was based on the format of teacher training sessions, and meetings so the format did not seem alien to any members of the group. I needed to take into account the size of the group which were 7 teachers; 4-8 has been stated in much of the literature as an optimum number of participants (Morgan, 1988; Morgan and Krueger, 1998). I had to ensure that the teachers will have something to say and feel comfortable enough to say it. This involved listening once again to the teachers' individual interviews and reading over their transcripts to be sure they were going to contribute, not only to the focus group discussion, but also my research questions and initial findings. During the focus group discussions my role was to facilitate the conversations by rotating around the room and listening in, redirecting conversation if at any point it veered onto a different path, but not so much that the freedom for teachers to make their points was restricted.

### Analysis of Findings

The final section of this chapter includes methods employed to analyse my findings from the teachers' narratives, and finally the ethical issues I needed to consider.

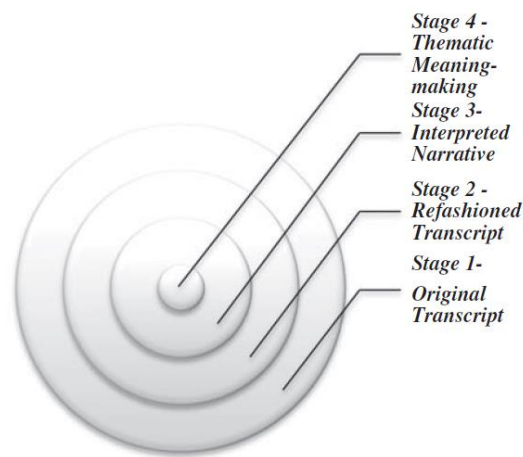
It is important to note here that media analysis methods were not used as the focus of this research where it was the teachers' narratives, not the media which was used as a stimulus for discussion. Therefore, the narratives needed to be analysed, not the media devices. I will be discussing how thematic analysis was used in the initial stages of analysing the findings.

Once the interviews were completed, the data collected was transcribed. This was then coded into a range of themes, using thematic analysis (Cohen et al., 2000; Lichtman, 2012). To ensure no bias inferences were made, the coded themes were cross-checked with my supervisors (Dr Swain and Professor McCulloch). This increased the validity of the data I have analysed. In this section I will discuss ways of analysing narratives, and its limitations including the use of thematic analysis in my research. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the teachers' narratives in this research. The analysis of a narrative is considered to be a product of a "narrative turn" in social science research (Chase, 2005). This will involve the teachers selecting, organising, connecting and evaluating a story for a particular audience. This allows the storyteller to also make sense of their experiences which can assist in highlighting their own identity, or identities. My research has focused on a professional teacher identity and the influence media has on it, but there are different ways in which people project this identity through their narratives, thus the listener will be presented with a constructed form of the person's identity specific for that moment. The interpretation of a narrative also depends on the listener as they are playing the part of transcribing, and later interpreting the narrative linked back to my research questions, hence why identity can be regarded as a co-construction through narratives.

After establishing the links, I could draw from narrative research methods with my own research, it has been important to establish a way of analysing the collected data. Following the data collection, there were steps involved in interpreting each teacher's narrative across the two interviews



and focus group discussion. Page (2013) outlines the levels of interpretation of narrative in the following diagram:



**Figure 4: Four-staged process to meaning making**

The *four-stage process to meaning-making* in Figure 4 can be applied to my research by initially listening to the recordings and writing summaries of the individual interviews. This gives the researcher the widest possible understanding of the narrative.

The forms of analysis I considered were content analysis and thematic analysis linking back to my research questions. I could have also analysed the volume of contribution an individual made compared to their initial individual interviews with me, but decided this would be a point could make as an introductory point to a thematic analysis of each teacher's narrative, not my main method of analysis. However, this level of content could possibly highlight how convicted the teachers are to the viewpoints expressed during the early stages of the research. In support of this, Parker and Tritter (2006) discuss positional shifts during focus group interviews compared to the narratives collected from the one-to-one interviews.

### **Thematic Analysis of Narratives**

My analysis of the findings involved a presentation of each teacher's narratives with a further analysis of how their narratives fitted into the themes as set up by my research questions. The same approach

was applied to the focus group discussion. For the individual interviews (exploratory and media-focused) I decided to present my findings teacher by teacher in order to not lose the meaning of the individual narratives. For each teacher, I presented quotes linked to their professional teacher identity, followed by quotes under each of my research questions so it was clear how the teachers responded to each question. From one teacher to another, it would be more accessible for the reader to see overlapping themes. Similarly, I presented the focus group narratives and discussed the themes that arose linked to my research questions.

Embedded in Reissman's (1993) four approaches to narrative analysis is thematic analysis which relies on categorising accounts or aspects of accounts that are being told. The emphasis is on the content of speech rather than how speech has been delivered, an approach I adopted. However, I do believe that the **how** may still be important to an extent when drawing up final conclusions otherwise the findings will play into the ambiguous nature that thematic analysis can be criticised for. Some may question whether every quote grouped under the same thematic category could embed the same meaning. Other issues could also be how one categorises what is not said. Silent responses are also just as important as what is said.

Thus, thematic analysis is useful for theorising across a number of cases which I have in this sample for my research and therefore identify common themes. This early analysis also proved useful when setting up the focus group as themes were already emerging so 'a typology can be constructed to elaborate a developing theory' which in the case of my research is the influence media has on teachers' professional identities. Braun and Clarke (2006) champion the use of thematic analysis describing it as one that 'offers an accessible and theoretically-flexible approach to analysing qualitative data' (2006:2). Although Braun and Clarke focus on its use in psychology, the principles can effectively be applied to other disciplines such as sociology which my particular study falls under. Braun and Clarke believe that, due to its flexible nature, thematic analysis can produce rich, detailed and complex accounts of data through identifying themes within the data. As Miles and Huberman

(1994) describe, thematic analysis involves analysing data for commonalities, relationships and differences.

The research that I carried out involved narrative research methods, specifically in-depth interviews using semi-structured interview schedules. Rubin and Rubin (1995:226) support highlight thematic analysis as a method that can uncover embedded themes within interviews, and Murray (2003) and Riessman (1993) successfully carried out thematic analysis of narratives in their research. Thus, the research design was crucial to enable me to explore my research questions and also develop a coding framework.

When developing the codes, themes and families, they had to keep closely to the research questions. In my particular study, the pilot research also informed these themes (apriori codes) focusing on how media influences teachers' professional identities. So I asked a number of questions about identity, professional teacher identities, and professional teacher identities linked to media. Each question was mapped as a code or free theme. This was acceptable for the initial phases of my research. However, after collecting my data, new themes emerged (post-priori codes). Finally, these themes were placed into families which could be closely identified as my research questions. The codes, themes and families are my units of analysis but more often I will be using the term 'theme' in my 'findings' chapter when analysing the narratives. It was important to maintain an open mind that further themes could emerge from the coded data (Boyatzis, 1998). The themes are therefore a means of building a comparative analysis of narratives. I needed to consider how the different themes might combine to form an overarching theme (family) Braun and Clarke (2006:22). The themes were then reviewed, refined, removed or merge together.

Using the interviews, the following 'free' themes/codes were identified from the transcripts. This may contain a mixture of apriori and postpriori codes. The apriori codes (A) were from my

research questions and the post-priori codes (P) emerged from the interview data, and not anticipated prior to the interviews being conducted:

- Reflecting on own professional teacher identity - A
- Reflecting on fictional teacher identities - A
- How realistic images of teachers in media are - A
- Teaching practice - A
- Teacher pedagogy - A
- Influences on teaching (other than media e.g. parents, own teachers, previous work experience - good or bad, teacher training) - A
- Inspiring images of teachers in media - A
- Emotional responses to images of teachers in the media - P
- Rational responses to images of teachers in the media - P
- Teaching challenges - P
- Outdated images of teachers in media – how these images have changed - P
- Intentions of teachers in media – who they are intended for - P

The codes above could be placed into the following themes:

- Professional teacher Identity (including those linked to media)
- Changing media representations of teachers
- Feelings towards media representations of teachers
- Teacher Pedagogy and practice, which could be linked to...
- Teacher-student relationships
- Other influences

Linking back to my research, these themes could be further refined to the following families which are closely linked to my research questions:

- Feelings towards media representations of teachers – RQ1
- What media does capture realistically/ what teachers can draw from the media – RQ1
- Teachers' professional identity- RQ2
- The media influence on teachers' professional identity – RQ2
- Relationships – RQ3

Writing summaries of the first and second phase interviews was a useful process when conducted on the same day the interview has taken place, as often facial expressions and gestures made during the interview were in the forefront of my mind which was useful if some teachers made particularly emotion-fuelled responses. Following this I wrote down themes that were emerging from the recordings and families if they applied. Family code/themes were particularly useful as each teacher may have said something similar to an earlier point made which could be classified under the same theme category, but the comment may not have necessarily had the exact same message. Quotes were then chosen to summarise the individual teachers for that interview, and quotes linked to my own research questions. I gradually learnt over time that transcribing an entire interview was not always necessary especially if the responses were not linked to my research questions. However, sometimes interesting findings did emerge so were kept as quotes to use as part of further discussion in the focus group interview.

I returned to the recordings once again to listen for any themes that I may have missed the first time. For what I had transcribed, I found that listening to the interviews along with the transcript to hand can resurface tones and emotions in the narrative that is not always evident in the written form. As a result, the meaning of the quotes altered and themes attached were not always as straightforward as I might have assumed. Themes were therefore changeable if necessary.

It was a concern that the transcription stage, and interpretation of the narratives into codes, themes and families may lose the true meaning of the original narrative, an issue outlined by Reissman (1993), Miles and Huberman (1994) and Page (2013). The entire process from interview to analysis

involves a 'selective and creative process of expressing, co-constituting, understanding, and living' (Yu, 2013:4), but may not be regarded as a true description of the reality. Although the word *reflection* or *reflexivity* is used often in relation to narrative research, what is finally conveyed is never a mirror image of the original as 'refraction occurs throughout the whole process of reflection' from the teller and from the stages involving the researcher's interpretation of the narrative (Yu, 2013:5). As Thomas concluded, 'the context in which these stories had existed [is] in danger of being destroyed and the stories themselves [are] being compromised' (2003:153). I could only, to a certain degree, transcribe and analyse the narratives as accurately to the original story as I could. If I was in doubt, I gave myself the opportunity to return to the teachers involved in my research to verify my findings. All the teachers involved in the research were made aware of this stage of the research design allowing them the opportunity to add or alter the responses made if they wished. None of the teachers did alter or add any points by the time the research came to an end.

I finally had to analyse the narratives from the focus group discussion. Each teacher, prior to the focus group, was given emerging findings and discussed these further during the focus group discussion. Limitations of analysing data from the focus group was apparent from the offset. For instance, I was aware it would be difficult, unlike the individual interviews, to clarify and collect further data after the focus group interview has been disbanded (Kitzinger, 1994) due to the challenge of setting up the same group, conversation and dynamics the way it was established in the initial session (Frankland & Bloor, 1999). When analysing the data, the conversations were sometimes challenging to follow due to interruptions from teachers talking over each other thus resulting in incomplete sentences. I was cautious to select teachers where discussion will be generated, and responses were likely to answer my research questions, but it was also important not to group together individuals where it may be almost impossible to decipher who is talking at a particular point of the discussion (Hyden & Bulow, 2003). This could occur when the teachers are talking simultaneously or if they have similar voices.

After the process of thematic analysis as detailed above, I instinctively wrote a conclusion for each of the teachers' narratives. In analysing each teacher's narrative, the narrative frame extended further to include my interpretation of the way teachers explored their professional teacher identities. This reflection as a researcher included an analytical focus on the representational function that the media images provided. The nature of the media sources invoked media narratives which the teachers discussed in narrative terms. These media-constructed narratives were subsequently reworked in varied ways to become the teachers' own narratives of their professional teacher identities. Thus, the final presentation of the analysis of teachers' narratives is as a meta-narrative relating to their opinions, perceptions, construction and reconstruction of their professional teacher roles, career trajectories and identities.

There are limitations to any type of narrative analysis, primarily that there is a loss in the authentic voice although there is a sense of individual agency when the teachers tell me their stories. The teller will convey their story differently depending on many variables, particularly who they are telling their story to and how they want their story to be heard. This is all part of identity construction. As Reismann (2003) discusses, narratives do not reflect but refract the past, in that the storyteller is also interpreting their story as they tell it, not reproducing it. These differences may be evident when comparing the content of the individual interviews with the focus group interview. There is, therefore, a 'crisis of validity' and questionable 'rights of representation' (Gergen & Gergen, 2003:578), which is discussed in the following section.

## Ethical Considerations

### **Insider Research**

When embarking on any type of research there are inevitably ethical issues that need to be considered. For this particular research, which will be at my own place of work, the issues surrounding insider research will be outlined.

Smithson (2000) highlights that there is a critical point of distinction between the researcher's role and their relationship with the participants being researched. There is no clear agreement amongst researchers as to whether outsider or insider research is more advantageous, rather that it depends upon the nature and purpose of the research itself (Hammersley, 1993:219). I was personally drawn to carrying out my research within my own institution due to the relationships and rapport already established between myself and the participants involved but also my understanding of the school and its context (Smetherham, 1978:97). 'Inside researchers find that those they study are often more likely to volunteer information to them that they would to outsiders' (Sikes and Potts, 2008:177) and researchers are '...more likely to empathise with those they study because of in-depth understanding of them....those they study, are often more willing to discuss private knowledge' (Sikes and Potts, 2008:177). Oakley (1981) notes that any similarity one has to their participants is always a positive additional dimension to insider research. Shah (2004:556) is of the opinion that 'a social insider is better positioned as a researcher because of his/her knowledge of the relevant patterns of social interaction required for gaining access and making meaning'. However, stories from the participant may resonate with the researcher (Drake, 2010) which does not necessarily result in a positive outcome. The researcher can take the participant's views for granted assuming 'their own perspective is far more widespread than it actually is' (Mercer, 2012:11). This loss of perspective can result in researchers missing important strands of information, not probing further, and may even impose their views on the participant under the assumption that their views are within the same institution and must be universal amongst colleagues. Sikes and Potts conclude that the researcher



can lose the qualities that he or she brought with them, and therefore does not 'act as a researcher' (Sikes and Potts, 2008:178). Some sensitive topics may not be raised (Preedy and Riches, 1998). Shared norms might not be articulated (Platt, 1981:82). As Mercer (2012) concludes:

The researcher's relationship with the researched is not static, but fluctuates constantly, shifting back and forth along a continuum of possibilities.

Mercer (2012:4)

I assume from Mercer's point that knowing my participants may create more variety in the stories shared with me during my research, and as the narrative is co-constructed 'meanings are always being negotiated' (Plummer, 2001:xi) by the researcher and the researched. Bearing this in mind, this gives my research design more reason to revisit my participants assessing and probing in more depth into their narratives, which will be unique to each individual participant. As mentioned in the previous section, there can be a 'crisis of validity' and questionable 'rights of representation' (Gergen & Gergen, 2003:1026), as 'narratives sit at the intersection of history, biography and society' (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005:132). This is a social constructivist theory, and so narratives are not intended to represent truth but uncover something deeper such as beliefs and values. This can present a moral dilemma for some researchers as the story will be told on behalf of the teachers through the researcher's decisions. Tensions can also occur between the role one has as a researcher and one's professional duties. As Floyd and Arthur explain (2012:176) researchers can often be told details in confidence which could be to the detriment of the institution. Loyalties are brought into question whether to inform senior colleagues or not. However, insider researchers are also better placed to anticipate such pitfalls and 'they understand the subtle and diffuse links between situations and events; they can assess the implications' (Griffiths, 1985:211). Other issues that may arise include the fear participants have of being judged by someone they know (Shah, 2004:569), in which case being an outsider research is beneficial. Hockey (1993:206) describes that participants may also have greater knowledge of an insider research and form preconceptions about the research prior to the research commencing. Drake (2010) emphasizes the importance of insider researchers reflecting on their research especially

future implications; knowing participants' personal information may prove problematic as they may continue to work with that colleague post-research.

The role of the researcher is taken further by Pinnegar and Daynes (2007:7) who believe that '...we become narrative inquirers only when we recognise and embrace the interactive quality of the researcher-researched relationship'. I have experienced already the ever-changing relationship I have had with participants who have been involved in my pilot study. Each participant was interviewed at least twice and by the second interview, the participants' readiness to share their stories had notably improved. Based on the pilot research it seems the familiarity results in longer interviews than expected hence the time slot of 1-1.5 hours per interview. This may be considered as lengthy for some but none of the pilot interviews so far have fallen short of 1 hour. The advantages of insider research support the strength of my particular study, as a means of gaining insight into the lives of my participants in a different manner to an outsider researcher. However, it is also important to be aware of the disadvantages that can also emerge during insider research, and to guard against them.

My insider researcher role encompassed two aspects: being a teacher resulted in an understanding of highs and lows associated with the teaching profession, and being a teacher in the same school meant an appreciation of their experiences on a day to day basis in that specific school setting. In summarising the advantages of the insider researcher role, there was an already-established relationship and rapport between myself and the teachers in the sample. I also had an understanding of the school and its context. As an insider researcher, I was exposed to conversations out of the interview setting such as in the staff room or during social gatherings to overhear further reflections and opinions of the media images. These were useful in my interpretations of the teachers' narratives. Carrying out insider research also inspired some of the teachers in the sample to investigate carrying out or being part of a research project; this research developed a positive research culture within the group of teachers.

Conversely, there are disadvantages of the role of an insider researcher, including some sections of narratives being unnoticed as the researcher may be too involved with the environment they are researching. Thus, there can be a loss of perspective. In the same vein, the level which the insider is entwined with the setting could result in not recognising the social structures that may be influencing the reflections the teachers share in the narratives. At the time of carrying out this research, I had a management role which could have resulted in teachers being more cautious of what they shared in their narratives. The teachers may have omitted details which they may have deemed as personal to prevent their opinions reaching the senior management team, students, parents or the governing body.

#### **Further Ethical Considerations:**

The research was carried out within the BERA guidelines (2011) and was examined by the Institute of Education's ethics committee. The research was informed by literature carried out on the specific issues I focused on in this research which includes identity, performance, professionalism and media representations. The participants were informed of what the research explored. Participants were able to withdraw from the research at any time. Throughout this research, the narrative attempted to remain faithful to the teachers' own values and experiences. On request I was happy to share any findings and transcripts with the participants after the fieldwork was completed. All participants were made aware that I would not be able to guarantee anonymity; although names were changed it may be possible to work out who the participants were based on the details of their roles in the school. This may have an effect on the data I collected.

Within this chapter, I have outlined the research design, methods of analysis, and ethical areas to consider while referring back to research which has informed my decision for carrying out this research in this particular way. The chapter which follows is my Findings and Discussion, firstly beginning with each of the teachers' narratives and the findings from the focus group interviews.

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## 5. Findings and Discussion: Teachers' Narratives

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As identified in my introduction to my thesis, my research questions were as follows:

1. **How do teachers interpret fictional representations of teachers in the media? (RQ1)**
2. **How might teachers use media images of teachers as a vehicle in the construction of their professional teacher identities? (RQ2)**
3. **How do media depictions of teachers' relationships with students affect the construction of teachers' professional identity, pedagogy and practice? (RQ3)**

In this chapter, **Teachers' Narratives**, stories of each of the 13 teachers are documented including commentaries. The format which I have chosen to present my findings attempts to maintain the life story as well as representing each teacher's narrative construction and reconstruction, or storying. Each teacher contributed to the overall understanding of the research question findings even if responses to the research questions varied in different ways and to varying degrees.

To further explain the choice of format for this chapter, the first set of interviews (the exploratory phase), were used to structure a summary/biography of each individual teacher with the second phase of interviews linking more closely to media images of teachers. However, it is important to note that examples of teacher images in media did arise in the exploratory phase with some of the teachers, and this is highlighted in the commentary of the narratives. Specific details of the teacher images in media can be found in Appendix II. The narratives will then be presented under the research questions above. However, findings from research question 1 and 2 tended to overlap hence why findings for these will be under a combined heading of: *Teachers' interpretations of teacher images in media (RQ1) and the use of teacher images as a vehicle to express their professional teacher identity (RQ2)*. Research question 3 (RQ3) will be altered to *teacher-student relationships* to act as a heading for the relevant findings. Emerging themes (appearing in bold) and links to key research texts are outlined in

a final conclusion for each teacher. These are discussed further in depth in the chapter **Discussion of Findings**.

### Matt

Matt has worked at the school for 7 years as a Geography, RE and Travel and Tourism teacher. He was promoted to Deputy Head of Year 10 in September 2012, and moved onto Head of Year from 2013 for Year 11, and at the time the research was conducted, he was the Head of Year 7. Previous to this, Matt completed two years as a PVE (Preventing Violent Extremism) coordinator. His mother has been a teacher at the same school in various capacities (Head of Year, Head of Department, teacher of English, and a teaching and learning lead for SEN students), and is a positive role model and motivating figure in Matt's decision to become a teacher. Matt's wife is also a teacher, but in the primary sector. Matt maintained a very hard working, yet informal attitude to his work. He also considered the social side of teaching as an important aspect of his teaching role. He put this down to an accident where he sustained a serious back injury. Since this occurred, Matt believed that one cannot take too much too seriously. This was shared during the exploratory phase (the first phase of interviews). As well as the background Matt shared, he also described his favourite teachers which happened to be his Geography teacher, and his Head of Year, coincidentally the two roles Matt has followed in his career. He discussed the informal characteristics of both of these teachers, an attribute he described himself as having in the second phase of interviews. A passion and a love for the subject both his teachers had also stood out in his narrative, which is another quality Matt drew upon from the TV and film images of teachers he chose in the second phase of interviews, and described passion for his subject as an important part of his own professional teacher identity.

When Matt was shown general images of teachers during the exploratory phase, he described himself in the following way:

I don't. I tend to ...I dunno...I....purely because I can't stand up all day cos it starts to hurt my back but I tend to spend a lot of time sat at me desk, sort of thing, or on a table or

rather than standing right at the front I sort of dot around... perch on the table at the back or something and sort of make them feel more sort of relaxed as well cos I think they work better when they think that, you know, it's not sort of eyes from the front all the time I think.

Matt described himself as taking a relaxed approach to his teaching, although it is unclear whether sitting down genuinely makes students feel relaxed or this is the perception Matt has of how his professional teacher identity comes across to the students. Thus there could be a double agenda to his identity, that is how one perceives themselves, and how they perceive others to see them.

Teachers' interpretations of teacher images in media (RQ1) and the use of teacher images as a vehicle to express their professional teacher identity (RQ2).

#### **Television and Film:**

When shown images of teachers from film and TV, Matt recognised most of the teachers and was especially drawn to Perez from *The Wire* (HBO: 2000-2008). He also pointed out Mr White from *Breaking Bad* (AMC: 2008-2013) whom Matt described as 'loving his subject but does not like teaching anymore'. Matt drew on similarities he had seen with teachers he knew based on the teacher images he chose comparing Mr White to a previous head of department at his current school:

In *Breaking Bad*, he loves his subject. He may not be in the right kinda job for him but he clearly is passionate about what he is teaching. That strikes me more than not wanting to be in the job. That's similar to my previous Head of Department who became disillusioned by the end.

Matt described stages of a teacher's career from his own particular experiences, and also emotions towards a job can change as a career progresses.

Matt likened himself to Perez from *The Wire* as he can often be 'confronted with students who do not take an interest in the subject he teaches' (Geography) especially as a GCSE option from Year 9 going into Year 10:

Like Perez from *The Wire*. He's got a Maths class who don't wanna be there, but he just turns it into something they could click with, so it's like something I would try and do. It can be quite tough. I've always had an informal approach. I like to keep it informal but remembering I've got a job to do.

Matt hoped he shows a passion for his subject like Mr White in *Breaking Bad*. Matt was able to describe traits from images of teachers similar to his own professional teacher identity, but he was also able to outline aspects of teacher images he felt he is nothing like. For instance, he thought he did not see any similarities between himself and the older teachers in *Grange Hill* (BBC: 1978-2015), or Dumbledore from *Harry Potter* (2001-2011). Matt is also identified where his professional teacher identity needed altering depending on the type of student or class he teaches. This related well to teachers' opinions about their own professional identity, and the need for this identity to be a fluid one (Buckingham, 2008). After the pause, and also related to RQ3, Matt was able to choose teacher images in three television programmes who he related to, including not only a teacher but also a mentor. Matt's professional teacher identity was altered depending on the role he had to play (teacher vs. head of year). This supported the notion that in a single setting (the school) teachers will have multiple identities to play:

I could tie in with those guys socially (*Teachers*). I've had to learn quickly to mentor 240 kids this year, and you have to find ways to click with every single individual. Part of that I suppose....there are some teachers in Waterloo Road who do believe in that too, and even though it's a drama there will be clashes in personalities...and Mr White... I show that passion for my subject especially with my Year 11s and Key Stage 5 classes.

Matt suggested that many of the teacher images in media were extreme versions of real teachers. Saying that, he compared Mr Keating in *Dead Poets Society* and Michelle Pfeiffer's teaching environment in *Dangerous Minds* to a class he had in a school in Poole, where he was teaching a very challenging Year 9 class, so the images were not too far detached from professional teacher identities in his reality:

One of the classes I had at this training school I was in was a nightmare down in Poole. Amazing school, but this class was a Year 9 geography set, pretty much boys, erm, two or three girls in there, fifteen in total, all trying to show off to the girls, all pissing around really but when they walked into this guy's room, they shut up and he was like that... Dangerous Mind kind of...getting on the table sort of thing, you know...*look at me; look at what you could become*. And they enjoyed that.

Matt indicated that a character emerges in the classroom dependent on the type of class, and level of engagement the teacher is striving for. However, Matt believed that *Waterloo Road* (BBC: 2006-2015) was written based on tabloids and was there to be a ratings winner, not to represent teachers accurately. This comment reflected how fictional media, from a teacher's point of view, can be dictated to by non-fictional media, and was also described by Matt using emotive language and tone. According to Matt, the negative representations of teachers in non-fictional media can be challenged in fictional media or supported by using the stories to create scripts for TV and/or film:

*Waterloo Road* is just bullocks! The people who write it have just read the tabloids and bashed out a script. I think it takes the smallest issues you read about, kids in general, and blows it out of proportion. It's just there. It's a rating winner, and you can't win ratings by writing a drama about everyday life in a school.

This particular quote brought into question the purpose of teacher images in media, especially those on TV which are scripted in a specific manner for the purpose of entertainment or dramatization by the writers of the show, but not in an attempt to educate the audience. Matt compared the older teachers in *Grange Hill* to his teachers at Tiffin Grammar School. He described how that approach was on its way out as the 'kids' attitudes are changing'. When asked how he felt television programmes like he mentioned represented teachers, his response also included an analysis of the changing face of teachers from the 1990s to 2000s. Matt described how societal changes in students' attitudes are also dictating a shift in teachers' professional identity:



Students are portrayed worse than the teachers, getting in their teachers' cars, but you'd get sacked if you did that unless it's an extreme circumstance like missing an exam. The older one in Grange Hill remind me of those older teachers I had in school in Tiffin. It was a transition stage when that approach was on its way out. Between the 1900s and 2000s, there were big changes in kids' attitudes and changes to technology and the introduction of mobile phones. It changed the dynamics of teachers and teaching. In the 70s that type of teacher would command more respect. A teacher like that now could not work like that, no one as straight-laced exists now. You've gotta have that mix as a teacher now.

Matt's last point is particularly interesting as he described an extinct image of teachers which no longer exists in real life. This type of teacher, according to Matt, can be seen as old-fashioned, especially one that would command more immediate respect. This challenged Judge's (1995) sustainable image of teachers as the more traditional type.

Matt loved the series, *Teachers (Channel 4: 2001-2004)*, which reminded him of the importance of having a social group amongst the teaching staff at school. Here Matt discussed the social aspects of teaching aside from what occurs in the classroom. This seemed an important factor for him personally as he mentioned this a few times across both sets of interviews. He claimed that the teachers in *Teachers* are 'just like us'. He mentioned the social aspects of teaching a few times across both interviews. This was clearly an important side to being a teacher for him, not only what was occurring in the classroom. He also discussed the 'corridor chats that teachers can have with each other' which shows a changing aspect to teaching, that one's professional teacher identity in the corridor does not have to maintain itself out of the classroom compared to the teachers he had when he was at school.

I think everyone I know has got that side of them (points to the image of Channel 4's *Teachers*). Everybody here has that in them, in our social group.

... You wouldn't have, from the school I went to, teachers stopping in the corridor and having a little chat. Kids are more relaxed about it, and teachers are more human. These ones are changing as we're changing.

For Matt, his professional teacher identity was a role to play, and there were other roles he embraced within the school as he described the other 'sides' teachers have. This social aspect of teaching was also discussed by the other teachers in this research, especially the more experienced ones. It seemed that from Matt's perspective, there was a pressure to maintain the same identity across a school even if outside of the classroom. He also acknowledged that students may be more receptive to different roles a teacher may have to play, and as mentioned by Matt and some other teachers, students may strive to become familiar with other identities of a teacher, asking personal questions to learn about their personal identity. This is also related to RQ3 as well as the awareness from the teachers that a professional teacher identity is an identity among others for that individual, something that even the students are conscious of and therefore attempt to access. Media are possibly giving viewers access to these other identities, making them more aware of the other identities especially when taking teachers aside in reality documentaries for a one-to-one conversation away from the classroom.

According to his narrative, Matt did not believe that teachers actively seek to watch fictional TV programmes and film for the teacher images within them, nor do they go out of their way to be affected by them either. This later emerged in Matt's narrative as not a conscious reflection, although much of his narrative showed evidence of reflecting on these fictional images. This was also interesting in terms of teachers' depth of self-awareness and indeed the depth of their cultural and social awareness:

Some get it wrong like Waterloo Road. People watch it and think that's exactly what it's like. I dunno if it's had an impact on teachers because teachers don't necessarily go out of their way to watch these and think, right how could I adjust to be more like that? They're watching it like a guilty pleasure to say, *it's never like that*. I suppose they could

be evaluating themselves thinking, oh shit, I do that, but they don't go out to be affected or influenced by it.

Interestingly, during the latter stages of the second interview and the focus group interview, Matt considered teachers to be reflective and 'evaluative' of their professional teacher identity when watching images of teachers in TV and films. Matt may be correct that teachers do not seek to be affected by teacher images in media, but they may be affected nonetheless as is evident as his narrative progresses. Matt's narrative develops towards performance necessary for a professional teacher identity:

They always say to you during your PGCE, whoever you are at home, you gotta put on a face for work, but I dunno I just, I just don't. I chose not to. From day one really.

Matt admits he observed teachers' professional identity in media, but not necessarily their teaching practice. According to Matt, it may be difficult not to reflect on one's role identity when presented with it visually for a period of time as is the case in TV and film. He added that individuals may not be actively seeking out to be reflective, but it could be an innate response that cannot be avoided as it is a natural state to be reflective when observing someone in one's own profession, and it is also 'natural' to be defensive about the profession when being criticised or mocked.

### **Reality Documentaries:**

With the reality documentaries, Matt admitted enjoying the *Educating...* series especially when the teachers eventually forgot the cameras were there and they opened up over a period of a year. He expressed being influenced by the Headteacher from *Educating Yorkshire*, although unsure if he was playing up to the camera. He also liked the Deputy Head who helped the public to understand what teachers go through in their career:

I enjoyed these (points to the *Educating...* images), unlike that (points to the *Tough Young Teachers* images) where the cameramen were following them in the lessons. After a while people in the *Educating* ones forgot the cameras were there, and it was like, it opened up more. People liked this more, and *Tough Young Teachers* was crap, and put on, a laugh

at their expense I think, but these were what [teaching] was like. I don't know anyone who didn't like it, both teachers and non-teachers. The Head in the *Educating* series was good. He made an impact on me, especially in terms of my role as Head of Year. I don't know how much he was playing up to the cameras but the real start was the Deputy Head. It's helped the public to understand what really goes on in the job.

Matt admitted he was impacted upon by the Head of Year in *Educating Yorkshire*, although stating earlier that teachers may not go out of their way to be affected by these images. Matt then discusses the perception the public have of teachers responding in the following way:

I think over the last 15 years it got split in half. The tabloid press have made us into hate figures for most of the public. I think parents want to blame something or someone, and we're an easy target, and with all the league table pressures, it's given them something to blame plus the whole entitlement culture as well: *why isn't my daughter or son doing this? What are you doing about it?* It's done a lot, the Yorkshire one in particular. In newspapers and social media it was overwhelmingly positive, and it's close to reality.

Again, Matt pointed out how there has been a change over time in teaching, but also acknowledged that the change has been partly driven by the press and parents (non-fictional variables). Matt felt pressures from all angles and these pressures are reflected in media, both fictional and non-fictional and as a result his narrative weaves in both types of media. The additional pressures he discussed also included parents and league tables. Matt concluded that the introduction of reality documentaries has been helpful, but prolonged in being broadcast on television, and should have come sooner so the public were more aware of what teaching is like. This could be due to Matt feeling that there is a misrepresentation of teachers' professional identities in non-fictional media and considered fictional media to be a platform that could be used to address this somehow; fictional forms of media could be used to educate audiences:

I think they left it too long to show things like this though. It could've come a little earlier.

You do have to have 'em but there aren't many channels that might go out to do it.

Channel 4 is good like that. When the BBC do it, it's for figures and shock value. Channel 4 is more realistic and the way they did it was quite good.

This did bring into question whether Channel 4 is more sympathetic to teachers compared to other channels, similar to different newspapers taking a different stance from each other.

### Teacher-student relationships (RQ3)

When Matt described the relationships he has with his classes, specifically the differences between the younger and older students, it was evident that he did reflect on the way he manages his classes in terms of his professional teacher identity, and teacher-student relationships:

Matt: I don't, I don't get very angry with them, but I can find myself sitting there and just going ... just rolling me eyes or, *for goodness sake can't you just stop for a minute and ....yeah, just think about what you're asking me?* (Laughs)

Davina: Any classes in particular?

Matt: Any Year 7s!

Davina: So do you prefer the older students?

Matt: Yeah. I can sort of have a bit more of a laugh, give them a sly dig, like taking the mick' out of them a little bit without obviously being horrible but, yeah I just think that whole ...the Year 7s you can't...Year 7s and 8s and that's cos as soon as you start...as soon as you say something or do something you might with the Year 11s, they might take it the wrong way. The Year 10s and Year 11s you can sort of get away with taking the mick' out of them, give them a ribbing and that!

I then discussed with Matt if he acts differently with Year 7 compared to Year 11; Matt again indicated performance intertwined with professional teacher identities:

I don't put on an act at all. I don't see the point to be honest. You know, some people like it. You know, there are some members of staff that don't, and some members of staff that think it's a good thing. I have seen both. Yeah...I know some completely switch off...I

know the fact that when my girlfriend goes to school she's someone completely different.

Few people down the corridor, when you speak to them one on one and...or if we're out in the evening or weekend or whatever, they're completely different to what they're like in the classroom. I dunno, I don't see the point. For me, that just doesn't work.

Going back to his first example of the teacher in Poole who he considered effective as a practitioner, it was apparent that an act was necessary for a particular group of students. Matt also discussed the need for one's teacher role to alter slightly when in and out of the classroom, or with different types of students/classes, which also suggests a different persona is performed by teachers.

From the media examples, Matt described the student with the stutter from *Educating Yorkshire*, as other teachers have in this stage of the interviews. This was clearly a memorable and recent example of a teacher-student relationship which Matt believed all teachers and non-teachers could relate to in some way. He said that this particular storyline demonstrated a strong and positive feature of teaching, showing how much can be achieved. It is important to note that Matt did not describe learning or grades as an achievement for a teacher but teacher-student relationships, so also related to RQ3. However, he was sceptical about how true the timing of the story was, and whether it was staged in some way. Nevertheless, the importance of the teacher-student relationship between the deputy head and the student with the stutter was evident in his response:

That story with the guy with the illness on his hands, and working with the boy with the stutter that struck a nerve. I think even The Sun actually put a positive article out about teachers for once because of it for once in their lives. I think it did actually open people's minds up a bit.

Matt was clearly differentiating between different sources. He seemed to assume that the BBC and The Sun hold hostile views towards teachers, and then justified his dislike through other rationalisations. One could question why this was and whether other teachers share the same view. As revealed in the focus group interview, Matt believed that media, especially the reality documentaries, do focus on teacher-student relationships rather than pedagogy and practice even if

they do attempt to show the day to day running of a school. Matt was keen to refer, as with previous quotes, to the press and public response to what was broadcast. This validated that Matt acknowledges and takes an interest in how teachers are represented to others through media, beyond the school environment.

### Conclusion:

Matt initially struggled with engaging fully with narrating his professional teacher identity, but by the focus group discussion he had reflected and was able to articulate this identity with more confidence, together with examples of teacher images in media. His responses were emotionally driven and he discusses other sides to teachers as part of their professional teacher identity, as well as ideas of performance as part of this. There is evidence of **narrative learning** in Matt's interviews (Goodson et al., 2010). He was therefore **reflecting** on his professional teacher identity from one interview to the next elaborating more and drawing on **examples from media** to express his identity as a teacher further by the end of this research (Weber and Mitchell, 1995; Fisher et al., 2008). Matt was therefore able to use media as a **stimulus** to express his professional teacher identity. **Performance** becomes more apparent as a feature of his professional teacher identity developing from his training as a teacher until now with the **personal memory** (Ben-Peretz, 1993; Goodson, 2010) of his mentor from his first placement who was particularly flamboyant when he taught. This led Matt onto **role identities** necessary in teaching, whether in the classroom or in the corridor, demonstrating the **adaptability** (Buckingham, 2008) a professional teacher identity needs in order to remain complacent in its context. He also draws upon **social contexts** affecting professional teacher identities (Giddens, 1991; Maclure, 1993; Goodson, 2013), expressing **frustration** (Hargreaves, 1998) towards the tabloids and the news on television.

## Mark

Mark is the second teacher I am presenting in my findings and discussion. Mark taught Drama in the school for 5 years. Aside from teaching in the classroom, he has always been interested in developing his pastoral skills within the school as he believes one of his strongest attributes is his relationships with the students. He resigned in December 2014, but in his last year at the school, he worked in the SEN department teaching groups of students English and Maths which he thoroughly enjoyed due to the personalised nature of the lessons he could plan as the group sizes were considerably smaller than typical classes in the main school. Throughout both interviews, it was evident that Mark was very sure about his decisions to become a teacher, mainly due to the experience he gathered prior to teaching Drama. Describing his route into teaching:

I never went back to it until I saw at the back of a newspaper, an advert that said, 'have you ever thought of becoming a teacher?' ... yes! (Laughs) and it had these lists of subjects and I saw Drama, and I was surprised at that...but the route it mentioned was the GTP...that was the route I went through. I don't think it exists now...I think it's a direct...something. So, one thing led to another.

The route Mark followed is particularly important when he later using these personal memories to identify with teachers in *Tough Young Teachers*. In the exploratory stages of the interviews, Mark was confident when describing himself as a teacher. There were no hesitations in what he conveyed to me, and was clear that Mark had thought about how he would describe himself as a teacher before, although he did claim he had never thought about it. This ties in with Goodson et al.'s rehearsed narratives (2010). At some point he most likely would have discussed this point with others or had internal conversations about it; the script had to some extent been rehearsed. However, what stood out is when he stated that he had not ever put much thought into a response for the question, yet on either side of this point the responses were confident and fluid as his descriptions build up:

The thing I would say about myself is I'm a good listener. I make time...try to make...try is a key word...for every single student no matter how long it will take...2 hours after



school just to...try to make lessons fun? It's almost like a sales pitch... you have to adapt to the customer...if you wanna look at it from that business side in terms of, like, if you have not got that first how can you get the learning in? That's why I see it as a service. I try to present myself...it's a nice casual approach sitting on the edge of the desk. It's quite nice. I massively enjoy teaching, and I am trying to promote my brother into teaching right now.

'Service' was an interesting word to use when describing teaching as a profession, as well as 'sales pitch' and 'customer'. Mark also talked about presenting oneself which brings performance into the role of the teacher, much like Matt in the previous section. A distinct role is played compared to one's personal self. 'Service' also sounded more traditional than the relaxed approach which Mark conveyed. In Mark's narrative there was a clear presentation of self when in the role of a teacher, implying a considered identity. The comments made seemed established in Mark's narrative, and similar points were made through his second interview, demonstrating a consistency in his narrative while also elaborating further. As much as this is Mark's story, he wanted others to have a similar narrative to share, such as with the example of his brother. A shared and rehearsed narrative seemed to bring confidence to Mark as the teller, not only in his narrative but his professional teacher identity he was communicating.

Teachers' interpretations of teacher images in media (RQ1) and the use of teacher images as a vehicle to express their professional teacher identity (RQ2).

#### **Television and Film:**

As Mark looked at the teacher images, he noted images that had recently impacted on him although not drawing on any similarities with himself due to the controversial nature of those characters he initially decides to discuss the following:

Ryan Gosling plays a teacher...the name will come...it's called Detachment. And Adrien Brody. It's brilliant, and there's another called Freedom Writers. I just found them interesting, especially the Adrien Brody one, but not in relation to me.

Much like Matt, if the narrative did not reflect his teacher identity, this was swiftly pointed out by the teller to prevent the listener attaching the description to the teller's identity. He likened himself instead to Mr Keating, as he was working more often with SEN students. He was constantly thinking of ways to engage his students with the characters and themes, and similarly, Mark then described Mr Keating as enthusiastic and challenges students with difficult texts. He had a passion to pass on, so Mr Keating was a significant influence on the way he teaches. Passion for one's subject seemed an important aspect of teaching for many of the teachers in this research, and was likely to be an integral part of a teacher's professional identity. He also discussed Dumbledore's calm and wise approach which he felt he drew upon in his role as a teacher. This demonstrated a positive influence of a teacher image from media on a teacher's professional identity. He appreciated any portrayal of teachers which shows that light side, as 'humour can take you far in this career':

I try to be like some of them. Now I'm teaching English and some poetry, I'd like to think I'm like Mr Keating from *Dead Poets Society*. I'm always thinking of how to enthuse and engage students with...especially with something like Shakespeare and really trying to make it accessible for them with their life experiences, trying to link it to them to engage them with the characters or the themes...you might get that initial *urgh*, but if I'm passionate about ...someone taught me that passion can be passed on. Also, Dumbledore, cos I love Harry Potter, and I love that character a lot, how calm he remains in situations that can be quite challenging, definitely a constant reminder for a teacher at school. I try to channel Dumbledore (laughs).

He further expanded on Dumbledore's teacher image from *Harry Potter* reminding him of his head teacher at his primary school:

Dumbledore was like my head teacher...very protective...knew everyone. He was strict but far. The presence he had...like a pin dropping when he came in for assemblies. That's what he had.

Although described as an outrageous character, Mark was able to find similarities in his IT teacher and the teacher in *Bad Teacher*. He did not mention specific names but implied he knew teachers like Mr White from *Breaking Bad* who struggle with classes as they were not thinking about the style of their teaching. Now a teacher, Mark felt sorry for characters like this in a school setting as he justified it could be due to a lack of training, or the person could have been an amazing teacher but they are finding it difficult to keep up with the changes in teaching. There was an empathy expressed for teacher images in media in which the image was true to real life, although the character and story is presented as fictional. Mark used personal memories from being a student within this particular section of narrative:

I think Mr White....seeing him struggling with the class cos he is wishing the students were as passionate as he is but he's not thinking about his style or any ways to engage them, just lecturing. Definitely...I've seen that in teachers that taught me, and as a child you don't even understand it. You just live it, but now I am a teacher, you just feel sorry for them. At the time when you're in the class you're not cos you're not being engaged and boring me. So perhaps when you see it now, you think maybe it's a lack of training or, as time's moved on, perhaps they were once great teachers, but over the years if they have been teaching 10, 20 or 30 years, they just haven't been able to keep up, and as I said it's the training cos if that initial passion's still there then they could be great. (Pauses) I'm empathising more now cos I'm a teacher of course. (Long pause) I don't think everyone's gonna think that deeply about it (laughs).

Although speaking about a fictional teacher image, Mark relied on his current knowledge, personal memories and also biases of the education system to explain why teachers struggle with their delivery in the classroom, or the love they have for their profession. Mark's outside knowledge he had about

teaching, such as from newspapers, weaved into his narrative much like the other teachers in this research.

Although many of the teachers interviewed claimed this particular teacher image (Ms Hasley) to be exaggerated, from Mark's experience, teachers like this do exist to a degree. Mark then proceeded to make some observations about teacher images in media. He believed that the teachers in TV and film are heightened characteristics of what teachers are really like. This was a description many of the other teachers also used, but still based on an element of reality. Mark acknowledged that fictional media can only work by exaggerating an identity:

I think they all...it's hard...they all show heightened aspects of teachers' characteristics and that's what's needed in the media anyway. I think the closest that I've seen on the day to day is probably the show *Teachers* and it was popular, like, teachers themselves liked that TV show cos it was the first time it ever really showed, perhaps, the mundane aspects of the career that, you know, marking and reports and parents' evenings and how the teachers would have to go to that, and also the hours that they worked, then how you built up a lot of energy and then they needed to use it after work, so they had to socialise and go down to the pub and things like that (laughs). It was like watching your own career on screen. It may not have worked if it wasn't in a comedy format (pauses). I even think the reality ones show the different sides to teachers, not scripted like *Teachers*, but *Teachers*, did do a lot of research.

From a British perspective, it can be expected that an American TV programme or film would lack the ability to portray British teachers, and there is possibly an understanding that American media uses different devices compared to British media. Again, this is an example of differentiating between sources as we saw with Matt. Mark was aware that there was a lot of research into making *Teachers* so the portrayal is more accurate than some others in media. He knew that the main character's brother is a teacher who he spent a year following around in his job at school in order to make the main character more realistic. I have described this particular point in more detail in the opening

section to this chapter, but to reiterate, many of the teachers did believe and wish that the mundane chores of teaching were portrayed so audiences were more aware of those aspects of teaching.

### **Reality Documentaries:**

Leading on from Mark's previous comments, Mark felt it important for teachers and the public to see the reality of teaching. He believed that there is a need for reality documentaries about teachers as people are not aware of the job teachers do. Mark, however, was not just wanting reality documentaries to be accurate to true life but he believed they may be able to defend teachers:

I think we needed the reality documentaries because I think people, the general public, weren't aware of the job at all. You do hear people complaining about the amount of holidays teachers have as if it's...it's just not fair. I think some people think that, as a career, it's a bit of a jolly, because of the holidays. That's what I seem to hear the most. These shows, perhaps people are not interested in the education, but they're interested in the characters on the show, and then they can become interested in what goes on at school. I've heard so many people say, *is that what school's like now?* They hadn't realised it's changed a lot.

Here Mark pointed out that the aim of television writers was not to educate necessarily but the education will occur as the viewer will gain interest in teachers' professional identity. Viewers could also question their perceptions of what they thought schools were like, highlighting changes to schools and teachers that have taken place over time. He continued making clear how he has been influenced positively by the reality documentaries:

It was refreshing for me cos I've only been a teacher in London, and even though Essex isn't miles off, but for a state school it was very different, from the make up of the school, the culture, student behaviour, it was so different. So I can actually watch loads of these, series after series. As long as they edit into the show the light moments. It has influenced me in a positive way, because sometimes what you see can be a healthy reminder of all the positives.

He pointed out the way of managing behaviour in *Educating Essex*, and that should be used in training for staff. He did believe that reality documentaries can affect people who want to teach, again demonstrating that teacher images in media can be used for educational purposes for teachers and non-teachers:

In *Educating Essex*, that wasn't scripted but you can tell they wanted to show the light moments. They did make a character out of the Deputy Head into a comedy character, the way it was edited, or maybe that's just his personality. I think it would be depressing for teachers and the public if you didn't show the lighter side of the career. If we just showed the struggles and the mundane, you'd feel drained. Anyone would.

The 'lighter' side could mean the social aspects of being a teacher or teachers' identities not within the classroom emphasising once again the different versions of the role teachers have to play. He began to analyse the image of teachers in media, and how they had changed from when he was growing up until now:

Looking at TV and films, the strict teacher is an old-fashioned image, like the one in *Grange Hill* but now we're getting more to the characters of teachers that are wise, caring and nurturing, and that's what seems to be more common in TV shows and films. The same with real teachers. Media is reflecting reality. Writers and researchers are getting better because the public demands shows to be better, to be more like real life. So, if you look at shows like *Breaking Bad*, and *True Detective*, and *Teachers*, the reason why they're so popular is cos people think they're so well-written which you wouldn't hear people say of TV shows before, but being so well-written means that research has gone into making it seem like it's real life. The stricter teachers did exist, but I think some of the other ones were written in to be the teachers that we've wanted but never had, their idea of a dream teacher, like Mr Keating. Very American. They don't show the management, just the guru walking in, but in reality it's hard to achieve that.

Mark believed that the reality documentaries could dispel myths that the writers of previous TV shows and films with teachers as characters may have presented to aspiring teachers:

I think that these do encourage new teachers....that teaching is not what people thought, not like the Grange Hill teachers, or some of the older ones. It's now seen as a career for anyone. I could take these skills and transfer them to a teacher.

Mark pointed out that the older and stricter teacher was not as realistic as the young, energetic teachers today. However older teachers of course exist now and so do strict ones. This highlighted how the image of teachers have altered in that the older or strict teacher does not appear to be as common in the classroom. This also reflected a self-image that is more flattering in its portrayal.

### Teacher-student relationships (RQ3)

As mentioned at the beginning of the discussion on Mark, he regarded teacher-student relationships as an important part of teaching and an integral part of his professional teacher identity. Mark referred to his skills in teaching as 'mentoring', highlighting the importance of teacher-student relationships, a feature that he believed the school noticed in him:

Yeah, when I arrived, the teaching post was just for a teacher of Drama but I think within the first few months, I think perhaps the school noticed that I had managed to build really positive relationships very quickly with students here, and also, managed to get students quite engaged through behaviour for learning strategies that I learnt in my last placements, and when a position had come up for an achievement mentor, cos I was also quite big on achieving and highlighting achievement within school, I got that position, so I was taking small groups out to...just a small amount of time to focus on achieving, especially the students who usually struggle.

In the first interview, he reflected back to his personal memories of his own teachers that had a similar positive influence on him with teachers having a strong influence on the emotions of students in their class:

I think straight away, when I first became a teacher, one thing I always think is to be constantly aware of how you make the students feel, cos we always remember it, but obviously you cannot be completely aware but any word, any sentence could mean something to them, but it may not seem like anything to you. Like Year 7s when you're commenting on their work, or something. But when I think back to Mr Knottley, I think, somehow, he made every student feel they were very, very important in his lessons. And when it came to homework, his comments, and the way he marked books, he was brilliant. And the second one was a maths teacher because he made maths enjoyable, and made every student...you know...no matter what level you were at he knew...he would let you know that you were making progress in his lessons. That's what was important. And now that I'm a teacher I think, 'wow!' Cos that's coming back round...yeah. I look back and think, 'I learnt a lot.' So the first one was definitely about how I was made to feel, and the second one was how I learnt a lot in the lesson.

He followed this with an example constructed from his personal memories of a teacher who did not have the same positive teacher-student relationships, and how that did not reflect well on their professional teacher identity:

It was an RE teacher called Miss Jackhall, and err, I think again, it was how I was made to feel in her lessons. You know, you look back and it feels...if you think about it, it's the feeling that pops into your mind...the emotion pops into you straight away and you can never lose that. Um, I was made to feel singled out, and, actually I felt picked on. But then again, you look back, and now you're a teacher, and you hear kids say they get picked on you think, you know, that is how they are feeling. It's interesting, you always have to try and listen to students, and how they are feeling, and they might not always be correct about it, but you can't change the way they are feeling. And that is how I felt.

He added that his emotions are entangled in the role of a teaching professional, and yet are also a drive to improve his delivery. Mark was a very reflective teacher:



It does...honestly care to me if I see a student yawning...I get quite emotional. I want to know what is going on with that kid. I am a good listener, the lessons are enjoyable...interested. I would like them to know I am interested in them as individuals.

I observe my classes a lot (long pause).

In relation to the teacher-student relationships in media, Mrs Norbury was initially pointed out by Mark as very similar to his English teacher, as she was 'young and sarcastic but still engaging'. He emphasised that she had good relationships with her students and made English accessible, which again is a characteristic that Mark regarded as important in teaching. Mark described once again how teacher images in media have altered over time. Mark believed that there has been a change in the types of teachers we have had and have now, and this is being reflected in the media. He described how teachers were very strict, and now they can be wise but yet caring. Stricter teachers still do exist in reality but Mark believed that there has been a shift away from the strictest teachers. He stressed that the teacher images in media were becoming kinder and less strict, and if they are strict with no relationship with the students, they are quickly singled out and not the main teaching character focused on in TV and film. Mark concluded that he worried students can be influenced by inaccurate portrayals of teachers, and schooling in general, such as the images in *Waterloo Road* in which students may become misinformed and assume educational rights that do not exist in reality.

He enjoyed the reality documentaries as the level of realism is better depicted compared to fictional TV and film, and said that he would watch many of them if given the opportunity. He pointed out the example of the boy with the stutter in *Educating Yorkshire* as one that demonstrates how powerful teacher-student relationships can be:

I think there was a moment, and I just know this from social media there was a boy that did a speech, and the emotion touched a lot of people. It was a really positive thing. It allows people to know what sort of students we deal with and how we deal with students with learning needs and how everybody can be celebrated.

In Educating Essex, they showed behaviour issues but they also showed the nurturing side, and I liked the fact that the Head and Deputy Head were upset at the thought of excluding a student. I think that's so important for the public to see. The answer in a lot of people's heads, even for criminals is just give them the sentence and kick them under the carpet. What people do at school is helping people, cos it is a service.

Again, Mark looked towards reality documentaries, not only as a source of accuracy in its portrayal of teachers but to improve the public image of teachers. From Mark's narrative (based on RQ3), the role of the teacher in reality documentaries was important, but it was a character's interaction with colleagues and students, and contrasts of their professional teacher identity with their personal identity that he believed draws viewers in to empathise and learn from. The sense of realism was more evident to Mark in the reality documentaries as Mark was keen for the public to understand the role of a teacher (their professional teacher identity) more widely than what has previously been presented in television and film, although the relationship between teachers and students has been positively portrayed in Mark's opinion.

### Conclusion:

Mark's responses through his narrative are emotional yet confident. He has clearly discussed much of the aspects of his narrative previously with others and makes links between media images of teachers, and personal memories of being a teacher but also being taught. Mark discusses throughout all the phases of this research different aspects to his professional teacher identity (**fluidity** in identities) which is especially important in the construction and reconstruction of his professional teacher identity linked to his **teacher-student relationships** (Buckingham, 2008). He engages well with the media images to express his professional teacher identity further, and he is one of the only teachers who gives the example of a teacher image (Mr Keating in *Dead Poets Society*) that he not only aspires to be like but has tried to adopt some of his techniques into his pedagogy and practice (Weber and Mitchell, 1995; Fisher et al., 2008). Different **social contexts** are also discussed in relation to his

professional teacher identity and when elaborating further on the media images of teachers (Giddens, 1991; Maclure, 1993; Goodson, 2013).

### Jo

Jo is the third teacher I am presenting in my findings and discussion chapter. She taught Science with 4 years of experience in the current school. In the exploratory phase, Jo described her transition from a general teacher for EAL students to a supply teacher solely teaching science, and finally to being a permanent member of staff at her current school, now as the Head of Chemistry.

She described her favourite teachers using her personal memories. These were described in great depth with many examples of techniques they would use to engage the class; some put on an act, different from how they were out of the class. Others used quite traditional methods, a trait she saw in herself. Although a traditional teacher, the second teacher Jo described was not a strict one but calm and relaxed, different from the version of traditional and elite teachers described by other teachers in this research. Jo also discussed that she gradually saw the need to practise methods of teaching which involved her performing differently as part of her professional teacher identity. She described her two most favourite teachers, her English and Calculus teacher, indicating the role of performance and traditional techniques both having a place in a professional teacher identity. Jo also pointed out that seeing her English teacher out of class made her appreciate him more as she was able to observe other sides to his professional teacher identity:

My English teacher was a very strange and performative person. He would put on an act, and then have outbursts. He had this habit of quoting Macbeth every so often ... we all thought he was a very strange person in the first two years, but he liked me a lot, and I would see him out of class for work or whatever, and those times he would speak to me and he was nothing like the person he was in class (laughs)....yeah, and I thought that was really interesting cos he was a perfectly normal man outside of class but then in class he would be this insane actor. I thought that was really interesting cos I could see where that

actor persona came in, and it was only later that I thought he was cultivating a very self-conscious persona to insert into the classroom to be the most effective person. My Calculus teacher was the complete opposite. He was a very calm man, very much a traditionalist. He didn't do anything amazing or ridiculous or explosive, but he just knew his subject area so well... he just knew his stuff and the reason that he was motivating. My chemistry teacher as well...she would support us a lot in extending ourselves for competitions and make us really well prepared and revise for competitions in lessons.

When describing herself, Jo identified different identities that she has as part of her professional teacher identity. This would depend on the class she had, or what she wished to achieve by the end of a lesson. Jo was very reflective and with much to convey about her own professional teacher identity including pedagogical techniques used in the classroom:

**So, how would you describe yourself as a teacher?**

I think there's two parts to me...the traditionalist, so I believe in doing a lot of practice problems. On the other hand, I do feel like I get bored easily so I like to try new things, I also like research tasks, but I'm not good at bringing them back into the lessons so that's something I could work at.

**Are there any qualities you have adopted from your favourite teachers you mentioned earlier?**

Yeah, I would say so...my calculus teacher definitely who is quite traditional which my default mode is. It's useful to separate my own self with who I put in the classroom so my own personality is much on the mild side and too laid back, and I dunno, not assertive enough, but in the classroom, put on a different personality, maybe not as wild as he was but something more effective in terms of teaching....more assertive, maybe...a little more angry than I actually am...keep them on their toes...a little more (pauses) flashy (laughs)...like my actions will be more exaggerated than they would actually be, like

normally I'm not a person, you would tell me a joke and I might be like, 'heh heh', but in class it would be much more exaggerated.

Jo implied another side to a professional teacher identity when she mentions a 'default mode'. Jo also indicated how performance was an important part of her professional teacher identity. Since the first interview with Jo, her role had progressed quite dramatically. She initially discussed that she was probably less traditional than when she started teaching. With less able classes, however, she found she was more traditional because 'they need more routine'. She was leading Chemistry for the Science department, and found she had less time to plan as effectively as she used to.

Teachers' interpretations of teacher images in media (RQ1) and the use of teacher images as a vehicle to express their professional teacher identity (RQ2).

#### **Television and Film:**

When the images of teachers in films were first shown, she was immediately drawn to Perez in *The Wire*, and started discussing the challenges he faced which she felt she experienced herself in the early stages of her career. She discussed teaching students the importance of critical thinking, rather than simply becoming accountable for students' grades. Here Jo used her personal memories, but of her teacher training which was unlike many of the other teachers in the sample for this research:

I think I feel a lot of connection to Perez Belewski here. He reminds me of myself, and a lot of the new teachers in that he's thrust into this school and realises the demands of his job are quite different to what he thought he'd be doing, and he's really struggling. I remember, in a later episode with, 'I want to teach these kids', like how to do this properly, 'but actually I just find myself teaching to these standardised tests, and trying to get them through the hoops that they have to jump', and I really feel for him in that regard, cos I remember in teacher training, we had these quite heated discussions about why we are doing this for the sake of them making it through the curriculum? So, he's pulled in these different directions. I suppose by the end of the series he's found his

middle ground, built his relationship with the students and also managed to become an effective teacher.

Jo's description of Perez as a teacher in *The Wire* was woven in with her narrative about her own professional teacher identity. It is difficult in some parts to decipher if she was discussing herself and her constraints, or Perez's challenges in the role of a teacher. She found a common ground with this particular teacher image and referred to him on four more occasions during the second interview. Jo also discussed teacher-student relationships to be important in Perez's progression as a teacher (RQ3), thus Jo described this as a realistic portrayal of a teacher. She then points out Mr White from *Breaking Bad* and empathised with the character when he had to explain chemical concepts to students who do not understand the basics:

It's funny cos Mr White's a chemistry teacher as I am so a lot of the little chemistry moments in the show feel very true to life, like this one episode where he's got this kid in after school and he's trying to give an explanation and uses the word 'bonds', and the student just gives him this blank face, so he has to go on a digression, and says, 'bonds, you understand what bonds are?' (laughs) 'You know, exchange of ions', or whatever he explains it as, and the kid's still, 'I don't get it!' He's a person who... he's a genius clearly and he's got such a strong scientific background, but every time you see him in the classroom, you don't know if he's actually transferring that genius in his role effectively. In fact, my impression of him is that he's not actually the greatest teacher because he spends most of his time ...there's a lot of episodes where they're just taking tests, not doing activities or a whole lot of a teaching, and when he is teaching, it's usually him lecturing and being very didactic and imparting his wisdom. There's not a lot of feedback from the students so you dunno if they're getting it or not. So I think he's kind of my example of a really old-fashioned school teacher who's definitely knowledgeable but not necessarily a good teacher per se.

Images of old-fashioned teachers came through many times in Jo's narrative, but not the infamous Mr Chips. From the examples she mentioned, Jo did not think Mr White was a very good teacher as he was too traditional, although knowledgeable and passionate about his subject. She also felt he was too distracted by outside pressures, not just the pressures from within the school system. This could be true for teachers in real life, but lacked any empathy with this aspect of Mr White's character. Jo was the only teacher who discussed Charlie Brown's teacher, as she was an example of how to portray a teacher that was forgettable. It can be easier to discuss the teachers one remembered fondly according to Jo, or ones that we detest. Interestingly, Jo described the forgettable ones in her narratives as well. Jo is very knowledgeable about the films and TV shows she has watched, so she was able to swiftly comment on teachers with similarities to these images. It was also likely she had had these conversations before, as her narratives were confidently conveyed so may have been rehearsed. She firstly likened herself to Miss Honey and Mr Belewski, due to being 'fresh' and 'inexperienced'. She did not feel that teachers in *Harry Potter* was very realistic with grand gestures and sensationalist moves.

Towards the end of the interview, Jo spoke about an Italian film she watched as part of her PGCE training assigned by her lecturer (*Ciao Professore*, 1992). She described the teacher as a 'fish out of water' expecting a particular type of class but ended up being a group of impoverished individuals. Jo also discussed how watching films with teachers is a good thing for teachers' pedagogy so long as teachers are represented accurately. She said that teachers will not get much out of it, but it will make teacher want to be inspirational, and many of the films which focus on the teacher as the main character are focused upon as 'the inspirational teacher'. However, she did feel there was a 'disconnect' between this depicted heroism in TV and film and reality, hence why many teachers will drop out of teaching eventually. Jo therefore suggested that unrealistic portrayals of teachers could be affecting retention rates in the teaching profession because teachers do not have a realistic sense of what teaching is like from media representations of teachers and teaching. This was an interesting

comment, which also arose in the focus group discussion. The way teaching is portrayed can therefore be a little too glorified according to Jo, thus not reflecting everyday events in the teaching profession:

I think a lot of teachers think they'll be this inspirational person and go into these tough schools, and that's what a lot of the films would have you believe, but you realise this is not what you signed up for quite soon. So there is a disconnect between the heroism that is portrayed and what you actually wanna do. The expectations can be quite different. There's a place for these inspirational teachers but we work within constraints, and there are concrete things to achieve first.

### **Reality Documentaries:**

Unfortunately, Jo did not have a TV where she lives so she had not watched the reality documentaries about teaching, but it is useful knowing this as it shows teachers have different kinds of access or exposure to these media. She did think it was a good idea that the reality documentaries have been televised. She discussed how teachers are professionals everyone has been exposed to in their lives, and people assume they know what being a teacher encompasses, but people may be unaware of what goes on behind the scenes, and TV and films do not show all the aspects of being a teacher, therefore perpetuating the image of teachers the public already have. Although not having a television connection, Jo was able to comment on the reality documentaries positively:

I do think it's a good thing to have a reality-based set of teachers than just glorified Dumbledore and, um, whatever, for teachers. It's one of those professions that everybody has grown up and been exposed to, so it's one of those professions where everyone thinks they know exactly what a teacher is and what a teacher does, and there's many sides to it, behind the scenes that they don't see like the marking, the issues and politics. So to some extent, these movie representations, they don't show much of that either so you're always seeing the Dumbledore with all the tricks so that, kind of, perpetuates the images of 'this is all that teachers need to do' so they all think they know



what teachers need to do! You see a lot of negative opinions in media that they're not doing their job, that they're asking for too much, the unions are being too aggressive, and they have this wonderful cushy job with all these holidays. So, it's valuable to have a realistic representation. This is a challenging job. You have to work at it. You're not good from the first day.

What also emerged were tensions that teachers face, that is negative comments from non-teachers. She did not suggest in detail how this could be rectified although she believed if the reality was woven into films then it could be a valuable portrayal of teachers, albeit not very interesting to watch for the average viewer. However, she pointed out filmic devices which writers and directors employ; teacher images are used to make another group more apparent to the audience, such as the group of urban students in a French film she watched many years ago. Jo questioned whether average or middle class people would come into contact with these groups of people. She described the use of teachers as a way to access and humanise another population/group of individuals:

It's a role so many people have had an experience of so [teachers] are incredibly influential.... everyone's been affected by a teacher. I think it's a good technique to show this world that's different from the viewers' perception, to use the teacher as an audience surrogate and get them to build a relationship with the characters in the school. [Teachers in media] can humanise a particular type of student or groups of people.

From Jo's narrative, reality documentaries could be a way to portray teacher and teaching more sympathetically as filmic devices could either be too theatrical, too exaggerated, too dramatic, or too simplistic unless a single or few teacher characters were followed over a long period of time, making the viewer feel more invested in the teacher's role, which would include the everyday administrative tasks.

### Teacher-student relationships (RQ3)

Jo chose a few examples which portrayed teacher-student relationships. For instance, she mentioned that due to Miss Honey's relationship with her students, it can come across to the viewer that she was fairly new to the teaching profession:

I don't know how long Miss Honey has taught for but she seems young in the profession cos she gets too attached to her students and it becomes very personal to her, which is nice for the story, but it's not healthy. I don't think I have unhealthy attachments to my students...only that it can be very emotionally draining for the first couple of years, and you worry about all these things you have no control over, and you may become quite close to them, and you want the best for them, but there's only so much you can control so it can be exhausting.

There seemed to be an expectation but also a pressure associated with teacher-student relationships according to Jo's narrative, although a positive teacher-student relationship is what Jo did regard as part of being able to cope in the school she currently teaches in. When asked about which teacher image from media would cope in our school, Jo thought that Professor McGonagall would, and so would Mrs Norbury from *Mean Girls* as 'our girls would respond to her' and she is a bit 'sassy':

She knows how to deal with girls. We have a similar school and have the same issues going on such as social hierarchies and bullying going on. She can be sassy, but still build up relationships with them. It's important for our girls to build up relationships with them. The stresses have changed now, and I can afford to be more relaxed with them. It feels like we are working together to beat this upcoming dragon with the exams round the corner.

When Jo moved on to likening herself to a fictional teacher image, she chose Mr Keating from *Dead Poets Society*, and although a while since she had seen the film, the image did make an impact on her. She particularly enjoyed the way he allowed the class to engage critically with a text, and 'make it real

for them, and make them feel passionately about what they are learning'. In practice, she said she forgets about these long-term goals due to restraints from other aspects of her job such as her responsibilities. She would like to move away from using text books as often, and rather learn specific areas in more depth. She elaborated that she understood there is a persona she would like to have as a teacher (willingness to adapt her professional teacher identity), and described Professor McGonagall as an inspiration as her teacher image was strict yet not mean and could command a room easily. However, Jo understood that to create this professional teacher identity, she needed to strike a divide between her personal self and her teacher self, as well as time to reflect and build up her relationship with her students. This demonstrated a fluid aspect to identity (Buckingham, 2008):

I find it difficult to portray these traits if I'm not naturally like this. I'm starting to feel a divide so it's less forced, so not thinking that it's time to slip into these shoes. It can ring false and unnatural, but the more I do it now, the less I have to have that pre-lesson run-through. So it's time and knowing your classes.

This was a moment of reflection for Jo in her narrative as she talked about a persona she felt she had to put on when teaching earlier in her career in the UK; she had always felt that she had to put a mask on (Woods, 1985), consciously telling herself not to behave in certain ways, and to watch her body language in order to get students on task. For instance, she commented that she was not a very forceful person, but had to engage with that 'side' in order for a lesson to be productive.

#### Conclusion:

Jo elaborated the most on teacher images especially when discussing their use as a filmic device to access other groups. Jo was able to critique teacher images in media and **relate this back to her own professional teacher identity** (Weber and Mitchell, 1995; Fisher et al., 2008), and she also demonstrated empathy for fictional teachers using her personal memories as a teacher. Jo was able to discuss role identities of a teacher regarding these as '**different sides**' to a teacher and being willing to **adapt** (Buckingham, 2008; Goodson et al., 2010) to different classes depending on what she needed to achieve for that particular lesson. This illustrates the **fluidity** of identity (Buckingham, 2008)

necessary for a teacher. She admitted that she has become more aware of herself as a teacher over time and understands that she may need to **act** (Goffman, 1990; Gergen, 1991) in a particular manner to engage her classes. Interestingly, although Jo had not been able to watch any of the recent reality documentaries on teaching, she is still able to comment in depth about these images, showing that teachers may be exposed to these images through other means, whether other types of media or through conversation.

### Walt

I continue my discussion with Walt, an NQT in Science when my research began, specialising in Chemistry. By the end of my research he had completed 1 ½ years of teaching at the school.

From the first interview (the exploratory phase) Walt described his most favourite teacher similarly to how he described himself as a teacher, and the attributes of his least favourite teacher were not attributes he would consider as matched to his own professional teacher identity. Walt did regard teaching as a calling and something that he wanted to do, but his main calling was to be away from Ireland and live in London. Money was also a driving force, as jobs in Ireland were not offering him the money he could earn in London. His mother, however, worked in a school so he had been exposed to many of her teacher friends throughout most of his childhood to adulthood although no teaching experience prior to his move from Ireland, but teaching was not a career he was unaware of. However, when he decided to travel to London and teach, his friends were quite negative about the decision, predominantly based on what they had heard about teaching as a career. When I asked Walt where they had heard about it, he mentioned that it was most likely in the news and films, as none of his friends knew teachers, apart from the teachers who taught them. Using his personal memories, he also mentioned that most of his school teachers during his own schooling seemed detached from reality. He believed this is not the case now, however does think:

They were most likely putting on a front so it can be difficult imagining teachers as humans at the time.

Walt made many references to his sexuality and the anxieties he had leading up to being a teacher, such as overhearing students saying horrible things about teachers. Walt was therefore worried how students would relate to him as a teacher based on his sexuality. Interestingly, the teacher he described as his most favourite teacher happened to be a Chemistry teacher, who was very knowledgeable and who he thought may be gay, as he was 'pronouncedly camp', according to Walt. The teacher image who he also draws on is *Mr Walter White* from *Breaking Bad*, also a chemistry teacher, with an unstable family background. Throughout his interview it was evident that Walt had high expectations of himself and his career path, as well as anxieties of the type of teacher he was.

Teachers' interpretations of teacher images in media (RQ1) and the use of teacher images as a vehicle to express their professional teacher identity (RQ2).

#### **Television and Film:**

When shown the images of fictional teachers from TV and film, Walt was immediately drawn to *Walter White* from *Breaking Bad*, *Elizabeth Hasley* from *Bad Teacher*, *Mrs Krabappel* from *The Simpsons*, *Jess* from *New Girl*, *Yoda* from *Star Wars*, *Ms Norbury* from *Mean Girls*, *Professor McGonagall* from *Harry Potter* and *Will Schuester* from *Glee*. When discussing *Mr White*, Walt admired this teacher image for his knowledge of Chemistry and explanations of very difficult concepts at a higher level. He drew parallels with *Mr White*'s on-screen character and himself as a teacher:

With Walter, I remember watching the show, and his explanations they have with him teaching chemistry are really good, and I find him quite engaging, and the stories are really, really good. I'd wanna be like that...eventually.

I can relate to [Mr White] and then back to my chemistry teacher cos I'm still trying to improve my subject knowledge. It's not where I wanna be.

However, he then described *Mr White* much like his French teacher (Walt's least favourite from school) who was detached from the job of being a teacher and disheartened with the role, which he said he does not want to be like as a teacher:

I think he's, like, the classic thing that's happened with the teachers in the media, where he's really knowledgeable, and he's good with the kids but he's gotten bitter and he's gotten cynical, and he's got to the point where's he's underpaid and underappreciated, and that's changed him as a person.

Walt acknowledged that events and emotions linked to one's career can alter the identity that teachers perceive themselves to be. As a viewer, he could see the change in Mr White's identity so it was likely that Walt, too, would be aware of similar events occurring throughout his time as a teacher whereby one's professional teacher identity may alter over time.

When discussing *Elizabeth Hasley* from *Bad Teacher* and *Mrs Krabappel* from *The Simpsons*, Walt regarded both these images as:

...overdramatized versions of teachers that could never exist. They're too laissez faire and wouldn't be able to cope in a real school. They'd probably be found out and have to be put on capabilities. But they are hilarious and entertaining. You wouldn't come across them in a school. You couldn't get away with that here, but they can do it in films. I think to myself that would be hilarious if that happened in everyday life but I don't think it's realistic.

Walt proceeded to explain that there was an attraction to this inverse stereotype of a teacher. He also pointed out that a 'system' exists that possibly confines teachers' professional identities hence why particular teacher images like *Elizabeth Hasley* from *Bad Teacher* and *Mrs Krabappel* from *The Simpsons* stand out:

I'm attracted to the teachers that are bad teachers because maybe I haven't come across many like that, that act like that cos you can't get away with it because of the system that we work in, like you can be inadequate but not like those in TV shows.

*Jess* from *New Girl* and *Ms Norbury* from *Mean Girls* were also discussed but in a more positive manner as both were teachers that Walt would want to work with due to their good sense of humour. However, he also pointed out that their way of thinking is smart and clever. He admired the varied

ways these two teacher images thought, coupled together with their quirky humour which he could enjoy in the staff room in between lessons. After considering the various teacher images, linked to his own professional identity, Walt made the following comments:

I can imagine myself as aspects of some of them but not, like, as a whole person. So with Jess from New Girl, I find her really funny and as a teacher she's very kooky and, like, she's a little bit weird, but I'd find myself making an analogy with the kids, or saying things that are funny but a little weird like that. Mr Sheuster annoys me. He's not unrealistic but is portrayed more as a manager than a teacher. Mr Belding is the nightmare of what I wouldn't want to be. It's that 90s stereotype of where you get to be a certain age, and you wear a cheap suit and start to bald. I would just hate that. Maybe it's the age I'm at...the image. He is always just in the corridors giving out to them, and with the Harry Potter one, she's just protective, and I've learnt you do have to be protective as a teacher.

Walt pointed out his stage in his teaching career, being younger than most in the school, hence he would not have been as exposed to all the teacher images in media as others. His perceptions of what teaching would be like had also altered over time, influenced by what he had seen in media and conversations with his friends. The preconceptions he had were negative not based on actual teaching experience predominantly because teaching was not his goal, but moving from Ireland to London was. He then commented on aspects which cause media to lack realism:

You don't see things like the marking, or some but not all the emotional stuff. You don't see the regulations. Personally, I think of Dangerous Minds with Michelle Pfeiffer where she goes in and changes their lives, but it's not realistic, so I had a different perception. Then I didn't know what to expect. I also assumed I would become cynical and become bitter from it cos they wouldn't appreciate it, and they'd just be horrible. It could've come from movies and talks with friends who questioned why I was going into teaching.

The above demonstrated that Walt's professional teacher identity had been affected by media images of teachers, especially giving the example from *Dangerous Minds*. There was a strong indication that Walt was not completely secure with his professional teacher identity, and this was linked to aspects away from media influences. He also highlighted the anxieties linked to him becoming a teacher, and also the challenges he felt he might face based on homosexual stereotypes from his school experiences.

### **Reality Documentaries:**

When discussing the reality documentaries about teachers, Walt had not been particularly drawn to these images. This may be due to the early stage that Walt was in, in terms of his teaching career:

I didn't watch the reality shows but I have heard about them. I don't think I would watch them, like, if I'm out for drinks people might ask, 'oh have you watched it?' but when I get home I don't wanna watch other people teach. I'm quite tired and want to get away from it but films, they're fictitious.

This last point that Walt made was interesting; set in a reality documentary he steered away from watching this type of television programme. However in a filmic setting, he did not regard these teacher images as 'real' enough to avoid. Nevertheless, he did see the positive from a non-teaching perspective:

I think they're quite good but not what I want to watch after work. My brother's girlfriend even said, 'I didn't know how tough it was'. She has a new-found respect for me so in that respect it's quite good. People may be more empathetic. They don't see the times, hours or giving up your social life. You do have to sacrifice a year or half a year to it. I don't think people see that. People just think that we're too dramatic and can't cope with our job.

He indicated the opinions non-teachers have of teaching through watching reality documentaries while also explaining that a professional teacher identity is not universally understood.



### Teacher-student relationships (RQ3)

Using his personal memories, Walt explained issues he had with spelling and reading up to the age of 11. He worked very closely with a phonics teacher to overcome problems he had with his spelling and reading, but it was after the release of the Harry Potter books that Walt took to reading and improving his spelling. Prior to this, he barely read anything. He pointed out Professor McGonagall as a character he would aspire to be like as she is:

...wise and involved with any student despite having clear boundaries.

Nevertheless, Walt highlighted that different personas were used in his teaching compared to out of the classroom: a personal identity versus a professional teacher identity, which is necessary to maintain teacher-student relationships:

‘Walt teaching’ is different from ‘Walt personally’, like, they don’t know me. They want to know all about you and your life but I’m not comfortable with telling them about my life, like, I know I keep dragging it back to sexuality but if they asked me I have no problem telling them, but not the details of who I’m seeing...there’s boundaries. It’s not a performance, in the sense to be entertained, but they have to be engaged without my personal life distracting them.

He distinguished the type of student who might need to mask his personal self from, therefore presenting an altered professional teacher identity. This was just one example of Walt discussing this:

With the more able ones, I can be more myself, but the BTECs, they’re the ones I have to make a joke. I find myself acting more with them, just if I’m less comfortable.

He then highlighted teacher images on *Glee* and *The Vampire Diaries* who he believed were too involved with the students, and as the students are probably watching these TV shows, they were probably changing students’ expectations of acceptable relationships with teachers. He mentioned that this is possibly putting more pressure on teachers to ‘behave’ and ‘perform’ in a particular way, and that these TV shows were not really helping. Walt believed that the relationship teachers can

develop with students was as powerful as the subject knowledge that a teacher has, and together it is possible to engage and teach students successfully according to Walt:

Teaching is a two-way street. You need them to want to learn and they won't want to unless you can show them that they can relate to you. I think now it's changing a little bit because they've got people like Will Schuester and The Vampire diaries teacher where they're involved in the kids' lives, and so I think the kids are more open to it, like when I was growing up it was starting to change a little bit, like, with the Harry Potter stuff. They weren't all involved in the plot and story. So kids now do have a different perception of [teaching]; they're more outgoing and more willing to ask you things than I was. I don't know whether that's cos I grew up in a different time or type of school, but they are more willing to ask you questions, and there's more teachers here (points to media images) than before.

Walt acknowledged that the subject he taught can be a block in maintaining teacher-student relationships due to its difficulty, hence why presenting a professional teacher identity which engages the students was very important to Walt:

That's my main fear, cos I teach a very academic subject and it can be a dry subject, and I just wouldn't want the kids to be, like, this is so boring! If the subject matter is boring, it's at those points where the relationship and the humour get them and me through it or it'll be an uphill battle. They'll be like (sighs heavily) and not interested. This is what Mr White didn't have, and this is why teaching fell to pieces for him.

### Conclusion:

Walt used examples of **teacher-student relationships** in media to explain his professional teacher identity linked to his interactions with students. Thus, Walt was able to use media as a **tool** to express his identity in the role of the teacher (Weber and Mitchell, 1995; Fisher et al., 2008). He discussed acting or having to **perform** as part of his role especially with the aim to placing a barrier between himself and others when it came to details about his sexuality (Goffman, 1990; Gergen, 1991). Walt

described a clear line between two role identities, that of the teacher and his personal identity; this did not present the same **fluidity** (Buckingham, 2008) as other teachers in the same **presented**. This was possibly due to the lack of experience he had as a teacher compared to the other more experienced teachers. However, by the focus group discussion there was some evidence of elements of his personal identity merging with his professional teacher identity.

### Joanne

Joanne is the fifth teacher in my findings chapter. She had taught Art in this school since 2008, but had taught in two other schools prior to this where her NQT year was split across two school based on applying for maternity cover. She is a teacher of Art, and has had roles leading on projects within the school linked to the borough (PVE) and has been a Deputy Head of Year for two years. She had recently resigned in 2015 after returning back from maternity leave to start a life with her life partner in Bristol. Joanne's description of herself was detailed and there was a distinction made between her role as a teacher and her pastoral responsibilities. The way she described her professional identity seemed to have altered over time indicating an evolution in her identity as a teacher based on the memories she had of her first few years of teaching:

I think I'm quite relaxed. I don't let it stress me out, but that's come with the first few years, and learning to chill out and giving the students space to do their own work, and being calm in front of them...not being worried.

She also discussed her pedagogy and practice in terms of her professional teacher identity:

I can be quite flexible in that way and I won't worry if things change like that...just get the job done...you go in and ... I'm not a fussy... just get on... that confidence is quite unique, because I don't get bogged down by things like that, like if the board has disappeared... the people I work with are brilliant but I won't...I'm resilient I guess. I like the structured teaching at the start which I really like doing where you have your PowerPoints, your wide variety of resources, you'll teach about new artists, explore lots of things.

Teachers' interpretations of teacher images in media (RQ1) and the use of teacher images as a vehicle to express their professional teacher identity (RQ2).

### **Television and Film:**

According to her narratives, Joanne aspired to be like Miss Honey but also commented that she is 'too super sweet'. She was unable to say whether Miss Honey was a realistic portrayal of a teacher, but she did say she would like her children to be taught by someone like Miss Honey. This demonstrated that she did believe this type of professional teacher identity exists although she did seem to struggle to commit to a decision as to whether this was a realistic image of a teacher or not:

I think I'm not like any of these but I'd like to be like Miss Honey cos she's really lovely.

She's a primary school teacher so very kind and quite nurturing and the complete opposite of the nasty character of Miss Trunchball. I'm not as nice as her all the time.

She's a bit too sweet. On a day to day basis, being that nice is not realistic but sometimes would be nice.

She reminded me what type of teacher she would consider herself to be. In Joanne's opinion, she did not think she was like any of the teacher images from media, thus her professional teacher identity was not very well represented in film and TV. Using examples from media, she believed that *Waterloo Road* was a little more realistic in terms of being current, but not necessarily that the teacher images were realistic. She also commented that students who watch some of the TV programmes might think that teachers' lives are like shows like *Waterloo Road*, and she had sometimes mentioned to students that teachers' lives are not really like that:

There's a lot of stereotypes here and stereotypes exist for a reason, and there's probably aspects of teachers here but they're obviously exaggerated but the *Waterloo Road* one is most realistic of British teachers today; it's quite contemporary compared to the *Glee* and *Breaking Bad* shows but aspects of the writing and acting are not realistic. However,

the *Waterloo Road* one is so unrealistic with six teachers in one whole school and twelve of the same students always in trouble.

My research is focused on the opinions of teachers, but the teachers' narratives have tended to question what the students' opinion of professional teacher identities may be based on what they watch in media. Linked to this, the shifting image of teachers in and out of media stem from students' changing expectations of teachers' professional identities based on the sample's narratives. Joanne did not feel the teacher images in films were negative, especially the American ones, but quite the extreme opposite being too sweet and unrealistic, and not show the mundane jobs teachers have to do on a daily basis. She then described the teacher in *The Wire* as a teacher image which was depicted more realistically in her opinion:

The guy from *The Wire* was trying to do really well. You go through that as an NQT. I felt like that then but not anymore, as my confidence has grown. A few are beaten by the system, like the money side of it. There must be teachers like that, that are quite beaten.

Again, Joanne reflected back to the early stages of her teaching career of how she was as a teacher based on the traits Perez exhibits in the television programme. She mentioned that no one would probably watch films focused on teaching if they were too realistic, but then contradicted herself claiming she was drawn to the documentaries on teachers. However, this may not necessarily be a contradiction as, although presented through the same media (television), Joanne classified a reality documentary and fictional drama in film and television as very different from one another. Given the label of a 'reality documentary' may make the television programme more accessible as viewing teacher images for teachers who would not normally actively watch fictional shows about teachers, and reality documentaries did seem to divide the teachers' narratives as to whether they fall into the category of fictional or non-fictional.

### **Reality Documentaries:**

Joanne initially struggled to identify most of the teacher images from films and television as she had not watched too many of them, but she was able to identify more of the teachers from the reality

documentaries and had more defined opinions of the teachers' professional identities while also linked back to her own professional teacher identity.

*Tough Young Teachers. Waterloo Road* tries to be this using stories from the news. It's not...every school is different and teachers do change to fit the school they're in slightly. Certain systems that you don't control as a classroom teacher, for instance, so you might not agree with all the policies but you have to accept it and follow it, so you might fit yourself to a certain school, and feel slightly differently to that place.

She spoke confidently about the reality documentaries such as *Educating Yorkshire*. She regarded this format of teachers on television as less fictional compared to television dramas and films with teachers. She also found it easier to liken herself to one of the teachers on *Tough Young Teachers* who was in her second year of teaching and very enthusiastic. Joanne commented that she was very much like the teachers in *Tough Young Teachers* when she was in the early stages of her teaching career, again reflecting on the way she was at the start of her teaching career implying a change in her professional teacher identity over time. She related to the programme more so because she completed a GTP programme for her training, and could see the similarities in the experiences the teachers in *Tough Young Teachers* had with her own experiences during teacher training. She identified the teachers as a collective, being very energetic as they were new to the profession, and would be similar to her novice professional teacher identity. However, she did not think all aspects of the documentary were very realistic with 'private school educated people' teaching in 'mainstream' schools because of the 'perks' they would receive. She made comments about 'teachers like that' would not understand 'our kids' and similarly, she would not 'fit into that environment'.

On *Tough Young Teachers*, it was similar to the GTP, like, the blonde girl cos it was a similar route to how I go into teaching. She was a geography teacher and worked really hard with the boys in the class with their essays, so I'd say like that stage of my career. I was like here, really keen and passionate. I thing I found interesting was that they were from private schools going into mainstream school, but I taught in a similar school to the

one I went to. From watching that programme there are perks to go into tough inner London schools, rough schools.

Joanne did not identify with the teachers who taught and were educated in the independent sector. She did not feel she could relate these types of teacher to her own professional teacher identity, her previous student identity and her personal identity. She later questioned why the schools allowed television cameras in the classroom especially when a teacher was completely terrible at their job. Not only had Joanne expressed concern over how students may perceive fictional teacher images, but she also considered what parents may think, demonstrating outside pressures Joanne may experience as a teacher which was also specific to her professional teacher identity.

Towards the end of the interview, Joanne did not think she would watch the reality documentaries if she was not a teacher, thus watching what one could relate to as a professional provided evidence of being able to reflect while watching a programme which was focused on one's professional role and identities. For instance, Joanne also discussed enjoying watching *One Born Every Minute*, (Channel 4: 2010 - ) because she was pregnant and was therefore able to reflect on her own identity as a mother.

### Teacher-student relationships (RQ3)

Joanne discussed that the downfall of the documentaries, similar to the films and TV shows, was only certain stories and relationships with teachers and students were followed emphasising how important Joanne regarded these particular aspects, possibly highlighting features of her professional teacher identity. She discussed in her first interview the importance of teacher-student relationships, and was able to link this into her pedagogy and practice. Here she also showed how she was able to have form her professional teacher identity based on not being like the teachers she knew when she was a student, thus memories of others' professional teacher identities have helped her form her own especially in terms of teacher-student relationships:

I like to have a laugh with them, but not too friendly compared to how teachers I knew were. I think that's just my nature though, being a little reserved unless I have a

relationship with them, like in Year 11. I don't let them hang out in my room or anything, and I'm not a tutor, and I don't know everything that's going on in their lives, but we have a nice time in the lesson and then they leave. You just have to let them go a little bit, and not take too much control, and that's where that trust between the teacher and the students comes in, and as a teacher if you have a class and know them well enough, that's really useful because you can kind of just let them go, know that they'll go off and do the things that they need to do and then come back to you and be able to have those quite adult conversations about...*Well, how are you gonna take this further? What will you do with this information you have researched?*

Joanne expressed the importance of a teacher-student relationship being a mature one, and this affected how Joanne planned her lessons also. She was able to see the level of commitment teachers had as depicted in reality documentaries, and how hard they work regardless of what they earn. The central priority of teaching for Joanne seemed to be the students, which was reflected in her analysis of *Educating Yorkshire* in which she confidently gave examples of the teacher-student relationship between the deputy head and the student with the stutter:

I really enjoyed *Educating Essex* and *Educating Yorkshire*. It showed the reality of teaching. I would look at in *Educating Yorkshire* thinking you're working so hard for them. It's not just about the money. It's about the kids. The guy I didn't like, the Deputy Head at the start. He was a bit rough around the edges, but he grew on me with his relationship with the boy with the stutter.

She expressed how one of the teachers, Meryl (in *Tough Young Teachers*), could be someone she would like to advise and found watching Meryl frustrating, reflecting a part of her professional teacher identity as an observer of lessons. She described the character as 'separate' and 'not wanting to be there'. She described her presence as 'quite small' but she as trying to be 'bossy' but outside of the classroom she was 'lovely'. Joanne identified that Meryl had different identities in and out of the classroom. At one point she stated, 'You need to be honest with the kids and show that personality'



implying that a professional teacher identity needed to integrate with one's personal identity to some extent, but an act still needed to be put on. She went on to explain that Meryl did not understand the difference in the type of personality she needed to portray, and felt frustrated due to this:

I enjoyed watching Meryl. It made me feel better cos I thought I could sit down and talk with her to help her in some way to say, just do it, and make a relationship with the kids that were there cos you could see that in all the other teachers that were training albeit they did go on amazing trips and go shooting for the day, but she didn't actually...she was so separate, like there was a glass wall. She always looked like she didn't want to be there, and as a child, if you walk into someone's room and they're like...especially cos her presence in quite small, and she was trying to be quite bossy in her manner which wasn't her personality, cos when she was talking to her friends, she was so lovely, and kids love that. Why wouldn't she be nice and be friendly? It's a common mistake. You need to be honest with the kids and show that personality, and I suppose it is a bit like acting when you're telling them off, but you can't let them think you hate them.

Although Joanne saw the reality of teaching in the reality documentaries, and was able to reflect on her own professional teacher identity and the teacher images, she mentioned the 'hamster wheel' in teaching and how she could come across 300 students in a day, not only a single student with a specific issue that she will have the opportunity to impact on. She stated how stereotypes of teachers many times in her narrative, and how her identity as a teacher was not the type to be depicted in a film, TV show or reality documentary. She discussed the importance of a Head's identity and how that can affect teacher-student relationships:

The Head in *Educating Yorkshire* is interesting and down to earth, and the kids are quite chatty, and he's approachable. Some Heads just have the door closed. There were also two ladies and their door was always open. It's the people that do it cos they love it that are influential, not to be disheartened by it. It is about the students. That is something I don't wanna lose sight of in ten years. The American films have a negative portrayal, too

sweet, too extreme, high drama. These are interesting cos they follow certain characters and students, but how often do you get a stuttering kid to speak? Or take them shooting for the day? Even these can be unrealistic. I'll teach 300 kids in a day. It's a hamster wheel cycle. It's not as obvious as these.

As mentioned by other teachers, Joanne also pointed out the lack of realism in American film compared to British ones demonstrating a culture difference. There were many positive comments Joanne made throughout her narrative, but she continually questioned the realism of what is televised, implying that the programme writers may bring the genuine nature of teachers' professional identity into question no matter how close to reality the images may be.

#### Conclusion:

Joanne's narratives described a professional teacher identity that has been **changing over time**, comparing her identity as a teacher from when she started training to the teacher she conveyed in her narratives by the end of this research. This, according to Joanne, could be due to changes in the **surrounding social structures** (Giddens, 1991; Maclure, 1993; Goodson, 2013). Joanne adopts a **reflective** approach in communicating her professional teacher identity, together with the acknowledgment of **stages** in a teacher's career that will alter, or that will cause a teacher to **adapt** to shifting environments (Buckingham, 2008; Goodson et al., 2010). Joanne was very clear in describing her professional teacher identity linked to her **classroom practice** throughout the interview phases. She was able to interact with the media images of teachers using these to express her own professional teacher identity further with the example of Perez from *The Wire*, and also what her teacher identity was not like, with the example of Miss Honey from *Matilda*. Joanne is therefore able to use media as a stimulus to explain her own professional teacher identity (Weber and Mitchell, 1995; Fisher et al., 2008), the identity of teachers in her past, and the identity of the teachers in media also. She also highlights **different identities** may be necessary when teaching in different types of schools (inner city versus out of London schools). Teacher-student relationships emerge as a feature of Joanne's professional teacher identity especially when discussing example from *Educating Essex*. In

observing Meryl in *Tough Young Teachers*, she was able to reflect on herself as a line manager observing other members of staff, which is another aspect to her professional teacher identity, another identity as part of her **role** (Mead, 1934; Stryker, 1980).

### Anne

Anne taught at this school since 2004 during the time this research was being conducted. She worked part-time in the Science department. She was involved in a borough-based project called the Asian Family project, and was leading on literacy within the science department. This was the only school she had taught in. When describing herself as a teacher, she often referred to her identity as traditional and regarded being labelled as 'strict' positively. She found this was more apparent with the younger students but felt she could be a more 'herself' (her personal identity) with the older students.

Much like the other teachers in this research, Anne comfortably reflected back to the teacher she was using personal memories of when she began her teaching practice. Routine, habit and refining of one's professional teacher identity came through in her narrative. She then indicated a change in teachers' professional identities when she stated:

I don't think I'm one of these 'new age' teachers like...let's just like...no hands up. I would like to think I'm quite traditional or a balance between traditional and new. I like the balance I have now. I think they're the best qualities.

Much like Jo, she appreciated more traditional teaching techniques. Anne had a clear impression of what a teacher's professional identity should be for her, and possibly others. She did not seem comfortable with the way the image of teachers were steering away from the more traditional image especially when she related this back to her own children and what form of educator she would want for them. Here Anne's professional teacher identity seemed to overlap with her identity as a mother:

I think for my own kid I wouldn't want a teacher is completely out there. I want some...I want some discipline in their school and I don't want them to sort of get away with

everything, even if it means they get told off. I'd rather they knew a bit of discipline...not too much discipline but, you know, know right from wrong really.

Teachers' interpretations of teacher images in media (RQ1) and the use of teacher images as a vehicle to express their professional teacher identity (RQ2).

**Television and Film:**

When discussing teacher images on screen, Anne immediately reflected back to television programmes she watched after coming home from school:

It's funny you watch programmes like *Grange Hill* and think it's not like school at all even when I was a child. I remember *Byker Grove*, and *Heartbreak High*, *Neighbours*. We weren't allowed to watch TV after 'after-school' TV.

On interviewing *Anne* for the second time, she made many references similar to that of her first interview identifying Professor McGonagall as a teacher she would liken herself to. She also likened herself to characters who were, as she described, the more traditional and older teachers:

I like Professor McGonagall cos she was quite strict. I think I'm like that. They respect her for her sternness. She's quite to the point. She'll teach you but will relate to the students but she is really old. The one's my age are bad teachers or trying to get people to like them. Professor McGonagall teaches old school like chalk and talk, and there's a thoroughness, and I look at some people's books and think how can the kids revise from this?

Although she would categorise herself as several generations younger than the images she found similarities with, she described fictional teachers who were a similar age or a little younger to her as being too unrealistic and far too involved with the students, going above and beyond what a normal teacher could ever manage in the real world. She mentioned time constraints a few times during the interview also which was the aspect of teaching she expressed holds her back from being more similar to the teacher images in media:

Miss Honey's nice but I'm not like Miss Honey cos she had a lot of time for her children.

Mr Bronson is different cos he's too strict with too much chalk and talk. He has no compassion. He won't venture off to talk about something else and bring them back. So the kids aren't responding. I hope I come across passionate when I teach them but not like the Glee guy. That's too much.

She made several comments about *Waterloo Road* including the teacher images being likeable but not depicting the 'everyday chores that teachers really have to go through'. Much like the other teachers in this research, Anne used an example from *Waterloo Road* about a student being deported. She questioned when that would ever happen as the sole issue in a school day. Anne discussed the extremes that the fictional teachers had in terms of being too involved and 'nicey', or too stern; only very few were respected and had a good relationship with the students they taught (also linked to RQ3). She said there is not much of a middle ground with films or television shows showing the 'normal' teacher. Anne thought this type of TV show could not be aimed for an audience of teachers as the teachers currently on TV and screen are 'over the top', and for entertainment purposes only. However, Anne concluded that if teachers were filmed as doing everyday activities such as marking, the general public would be likely to tune out.

They're one extreme and others. Teachers who don't really care, those that are really strict, those who care too much, really passionate. That's not achievable, too above and beyond. They are extremes. There's a gap for normal teachers. Teachers aren't portrayed how it is. It's not true.

Anne's narrative seemed to harbour anxieties in the way the teachers in media were portrayed based on expectations the public had of teachers. In fact, much of Anne's narrative was laced with anxiety including observers' gradings of her lessons, which was communicated more when discussing the reality documentaries about teachers.

### Reality Documentaries:

Anne discussed reality-based documentaries with frustration and did not consider them to be credible. She found that the editing and snippets of lessons rather than whole lessons did not represent what a teacher really goes through. She found *Tough Young Teachers* particularly frustrating. Casting my mind back to Anne's first interview, one of her frustrations was not being able to achieve an 'outstanding' in her lesson observations as she believed 'the goalposts have shifted'. She found that the trainee teachers on the Teach First Scheme in *Tough Young Teachers* were easily achieving 'outstanding' by the end of their course and she was bitter in her response to this. She discussed the science trainee who, by the end of the series, met the Prime Minister in addition to achieving 'outstanding' for the course. This exacerbated Anne's annoyance further, as she did not believe that the criteria for 'outstanding' was in any way similar to the OFSTED criteria that, again, 'real' teachers have to follow and meet. This revealed much about Anne's professional teacher identity where she is evidently wanting to achieve better in her lesson observations but is failing to do so. She sees the teachers on television managing what she aspires to be even though they are seemingly struggling more than her in the classroom. This made Anne question her professional teacher identity within her narrative. However, as the programme is edited, she may not be seeing the complete journey these trainees were taking, and was probably forming a false impression of the fictional professional teacher identities. For Anne, this highlighted where the realism may be lacking as the transformation from 'struggling to outstanding' on *Tough Young Teachers* was rapid from Anne's perspective. In her own narrative, Anne described the science trainee's lessons as awful and questioned how a teacher who was always in tears after a lesson could be worthy of an 'outstanding':

With *Tough Young Teachers*, I was just thinking, what are these people doing? I didn't watch *Educating Essex*, but I did watch *Educating Yorkshire* and *Tough Young Teachers*. I dunno, it didn't seem like our school with kids taken out of a class for the whole day. Even *Tough Young Teachers*, they're all posh, and we're not all like that. At the end of the first year they got 'goods' and 'outstandings'. Even that one on capabilities got a good in the

end. A good! Most of the boys got an outstanding. They must have a Teach First criteria.

I don't think it's a good thing these reality documentaries. I know they got awards, but the kids were more realistic but not the teachers. The marking and deadlines were still not shown. You saw some pressures like with the science teacher, but she wasn't coping but got an outstanding and went to the Houses of Parliament!

Anne also discussed Educating Yorkshire briefly stating that the documentary was too focused on SLT and not so much on the teachers who had a normal teaching workload. She questioned whether teachers or members of SLT would ever be able to take a student who was misbehaving out of classes and talk to them, not doing any other duty for an entire day. She said that did not seem realistic at all. She did not feel, however, that she had an understanding of the way SLT in her school worked so maybe it did happen like that, but she found it hard to believe.

Maybe it's the editing. You don't see them struggling with day to day chores, only the students. I dunno what SLT do, maybe they do what they did in Educating Yorkshire, taking kids out for the day. They never talk about; oh I can't go to the pub cos I've been writing reports all night or I can't go to sleep until I write up this lesson plan. But that would be boring, but would appeal to teachers and maybe students. Students don't realise how much effort we put in but they know a good teacher from a bad teacher.

Anne also mentioned that the documentaries, films and TV programmes depict teaching as too much of an easy job still and the reality of how hard it actually is does not come through to the public who are watching. She did not, however, feel that students bought into the fictional characters and that it would affect the expectations they had of their actual teachers. She did not believe the students to be so 'naïve'.

### Teacher-student relationships (RQ3)

Anne highlighted teacher-student relationships in the early stages of the interviews and noted intricate details such as behaviour and mannerisms:

My science teacher, Miss Boden...she wasn't a great teacher but you could have a laugh with her, and you could tell at certain points that she, um....err.... didn't know what she was talking about either... and just laughed with her really. And I had a CDT teacher...design technology teacher, and he was... his style was very good like his mannerisms...his relationship with the kids, but you knew not to mess around with him (pauses) Actually all my teachers were lovely. Miss Boden was a bit scatty, and you could tell that she was drunk on the weekends but you could have a laugh with her. But we were the top set...like the triples or the 13s.

Anne was able to identify all fictional teaching characters as ones she would love to work with, but after delving deeper, she felt strongly that none of the teachers would fit into the school she teaches in currently. She explained this as having a persona out of the classroom with colleagues, and another in the classroom, and that the 'in-class' persona was not refined enough to cope with the pressures of a normal girls' comprehensive school, especially 'our girls...they are very demanding'. This point highlights an in-class professional teacher identity and a different professional teacher identity out of the classroom. Anne's argument below began discussing girls' comprehensives in general but was steered eventually towards the school she is currently working in which tells us that there are unique qualities to this school compared to other similar schools. Anne still seemed to be quite negative and used much emotion in her narrative following her earlier comments about the reality documentaries, so she was quick to state that 'no one in fictional media could fit in or cope in the school' she worked in especially in terms of teacher-student relationships:

Meryl is just so annoying. You just think, what are you doing? Speak to them properly.

The relationships are important but more from Key Stage 4, but not for like Miss Honey.

The girls expect a lot from us at our school. They want the time or they just switch off.

Our school doesn't respond to militant teachers. There used to be, not anymore, but they don't appreciate too much fun or too nice. They wanna get on. They couldn't just walk in



here. They're too extreme, a bit too unrealistic to the way we work which is on a personal level different to just what happens in a classroom.

### Conclusion:

In the earlier stages of this research, Anne discussed **changes** in her professional teacher identity over time, in that the teacher she was at the start of her career is very different from the teacher she considers herself to be now. Anne's narrative throughout portrays a teacher not comfortable to change. Anne found **similarities** between her own professional teacher identity and traditional images of **teachers in media** such as Professor McGonagall (Weber and Mitchell, 1995; Fisher et al., 2008). However, she also stated that the **relationship** she has **with her students** is also very important. These **relationships are different** depending on the type of student she teaches (based on ability), and also the age group she is teaching, with a preference to being 'more herself' with the older students in Year 11 to 13 rather than Year 7 students. This highlights a **fluid** (Buckingham, 2008) and also a **performing** aspect to her professional teacher identity (Goffman, 1990; Gergen, 1991). She also relates some of her comments back to her opinions as a mother, indicating **role identities** with differing requirements of a teacher (Mead, 1934; Stryker, 1980). Anne was able to **reflect** back to her childhood **memories** of teacher images she remembered (Giddens, 1991; Goodson et al., 2010), such as teachers in *Byker Grove*. Her **frustration** and **anxiety** about achieving well as a teacher surfaces when discussing reality documentaries comparing the successes of the teachers in *Tough Young Teachers*, and what she describes as a lack of success in her observations. By **comparing herself to** these **teachers in media** who are at the start of their career, Anne's **emotions** become even more apparent by the final stages of the interviews (Hargreaves, 1998).

### Clarence

Clarence was a design and technology teacher with 6 years of teaching experience. He was also second in charge of the department. He resigned from the school in 2014 to pursue a career in technology working from home, but was returning to the school in September 2015 as maternity cover.

Clarence started the interview recapping what his professional teacher identity is. He did not describe himself as a teacher who positions himself at the front near the board but integrates with the students including using much dialogue and feedback with students. The work he plans is constant so he can establish a good pace in his lessons. He likes to create a nice environment, but also claims to be as honest as he can about his mood with students as he does 'not like putting on a front' in his lessons. This implies a false persona or act, which he thinks, can be presented to students by teachers, using a different professional teacher identity for different classes. Although he states he does not like to do this, he shortly follows this by saying he can be more honest with the higher ability groups. This theme seems to be a common one amongst the teachers in this research.

From his own experiences and personal memory as a student, he hated school and did not want to be a teacher, but it was after travelling and reading a book about teaching (fictional) that he felt inspired to teach, and reflected on what he read during these 3 months yet he did conclude that he does not see himself solely teaching for life. He really loved design and technology, and enjoyed helping and inspiring others so it made sense at the time to follow a career in teaching. However, he had always seen himself as being a designer and planned to resign prior to the focus group interviews were conducted; he did not believe he would return to teaching.

Teachers' interpretations of teacher images in media (RQ1) and the use of teacher images as a vehicle to express their professional teacher identity (RQ2).

#### **Television and Film:**

When presented with the teachers in media, he instantly recognised Mr White from *Breaking Bad* and described him as 'awesome' and 'passionate' even though the character had cancer looming over him. Yoda was also mentioned for being 'so cool and wise'. He proceeded to pick out many teacher images and describe each in turn. *Teachers* was discussed although Clarence's narrative conveying a group of teacher images who did not seem to care as much as other fictional teacher images. *Waterloo Road* was also described by Clarence as a stereotypical portrayal of teachers who would never exist with

examples like Chalky who were ‘far too soft to survive in any school’. Clarence also chose Mr Feeney from *Boy Meets World* describing him as ‘far too strict’. He described Mr Miyagi as someone who taught the fundamentals which, according to Clarence, is not how all students want to learn but are essential skills for future progress:

Mr Miyagi was good as a teacher because he wanted to learn, but he gave him the fundamentals to be so good which he didn’t realise. You may not agree with him but the outcome is there.

Clarence then looked through the teacher images in media that he knew well adding commentary about their individual professional teacher identities:

So Mr White is just awesome. His passion for teaching before he has cancer, is just awesome. Teachers was great but they just wanna get down to the pub. Miss Honey from *Matilda* is lovely and sweet, but you wouldn’t get teachers like that. Good morning Vietnam and Renaissance Man, and Whoopi Goldberg...Sister Mary Clarence... in *Sister Act 2* where she’s in the Bronx and they don’t listen but she turns them around. That was really inspirational. *Waterloo Road* is just a stereotype view of a school that would never happen. I’m sure they liaise from with teachers but it’s magnified ten times to what it actually is. You need drama in a TV show, and more frequently that real life.

Clarence’s narrative flowed well and had possibly been rehearsed; he had evidently reflected on these images before the interviews in some capacity so was able to give examples to illustrate his points and explained why the images stood out to him. He was also able to liken many of the teachers in the media to teachers he worked with, which was telling of the different types of teachers there were in the school, and those portrayed on TV and film. He added that characters like Miss Hasley are around the school he worked in but flying under the radar. The teachers ranged from wise, to personable, to disengaged, to the story-teller, but magnified. However, he commented that ‘the drama is needed’, which there is in a school, but in TV/film the drama has to occur more often and be more pronounced. Clarence confidently likened himself to a mixture of Mr White from *Breaking Bad* and Mr Shuester

from *Glee* because of their 'passion for their subject' and 'ability to go off-task if they needed to in their delivery'. Clarence commented that his teaching can be flexible with certain year groups, such as Year 11 to Year 13s. This comment was similar to one he made earlier the more able students. What Clarence and the other teachers implied was the level of maturity (more able and older students) allow teachers to present a more comfortable professional teacher identity.

Clarence did discuss his teaching techniques in the classroom likening them to Mr Shuester due to his positivity, Mr White due to his passion and simplicity, and Sister Mary Clarence for being practical and thinking differently from the norm while also being very reflective and adapting to any situation. He thought he was nothing like Mr Feeney as he was far too strict and brash:

It would have to be a mixture, because I prefer teaching the older years cos they want to learn about it so a mixture between Mr Shuester and Mr White cos of my passion for my subject and cos I'm cool (laughs), and I talk to the students not just as a student, but actually someone. I have a bit of strictness in me too. I'd like to be like Mr Miyagi, but he is very methodical and I'm open to suggestion. I think the images are so wide. There's passionate and personable, but they're all different cos teachers are different, and people are different. They need to be magnified so people would wanna watch the, what's the point of being a teacher if not to inspire? That has to be portrayed here but on a bigger scale or will be missed by the audience. Some of these just wouldn't inspire students now, like Mr Chips or Mr Feeney. It's just not a teacher now, really strict, not inspiring and the way they look. That very strict teacher...it would only work if the students get used to the teaching style.

He made an analysis of how teachers have changed over time commenting that the type of teachers from TV programmes and films were very strict and are not in TV/film as much as before demonstrating a change in fictional teacher images and identities, and also the professional identity of teachers in real life over time. As examples of this he pointed out Mr Chips, Mr Feeney and the Hector in *The History Boys*. Although Clarence mentioned Mr Chips, he did not know who the character

was but assumed it to be an older image of a teacher as the image presented to him was in black and white. According to Clarence, the teachers in media 'have to be inspirational' in the same way teachers in real life have to be. He thought that the representations of teachers in the media were wide in terms of variety, and this was also seen in teachers in reality. In this regard the fictional images of teachers are realistic from Clarence's viewpoint. However, the fictional teacher representations could be magnified which Clarence believed they have to be to engage the viewer. However, he expressed that the overdramatizing made potential teachers want to emulate the inspirational teacher, such as Mr Keating which demonstrated a positive use for fictional teacher images in media. However, much like what other teachers in this research discussed, this could be a little unrealistic because 'the end result of being that inspirational is not always a positive one' in reality, so will not necessarily make the same impact. He added that more often students in real life will need to be referred to other teachers, possibly in roles of responsibility, to achieve such an impact; it will not always be due to a single individual teacher as depicted in television and film.

#### **Reality Documentaries:**

With regard to the reality documentaries, Clarence had only watched a bit of *Educating Essex* and *Educating Yorkshire*. He said it was hard to believe and wonders what the documentaries were trying to promote. He strongly believed that teachers and students behaved differently with the presence of a camera in the room especially as it was televised nationally:

It's hard to believe what you see, not to say they don't teach like that, but with a camera shoved in your face things can be different for anyone. It'll change anyone, and what does it promote? Tough Young Teachers is to show how difficult teaching is. I'd be on their side cos it's difficult in your first year. I think it shows it's not how well you do at uni. It's how well you can access the students and deliver. I hate reality shows, and I'll be moany if I watched it cos a camera is going to make things different. I'll change...I don't think I'll be happy someone filming me. It might be the judging. You have to be on point every second. It's like a lesson observation.

When discussing *Tough Young Teachers*, he wondered how non-teaching viewers would perceive the documentary and teaching in general; he worried that people may watch it and think the job was easy and be over-critical of the teachers in the documentary (based on what they producers decided to edit and televise). This, Clarence believed, would generate a false perception of real life teachers' professional identities. It transpired that Clarence hated reality shows in general, and found the camera was going to change the behaviour of whoever was being filmed. He did not like the idea of others who were not teachers watching and judging. Some of the documentaries, he though, may be inspirational although the negative opinion he had outweighed some of the more positive ones.

Clarence then went onto explain how people did not respect teachers like they used to, and this could be due to fear of stricter teachers in the past. However, he went into more depth about education in the past being a privilege yet now being free, so most students think they have to go, and deem their attendance to school as a chore. He believed the income of a family could also affect the attitudes students had of being educated, with lower-income families not necessarily viewing education as a valued part of life, highlighting societal influences on expectations students have of teachers also affecting professional teacher identities. As a result, he felt that teachers have to be more inspiring in the classroom in order to keep students engaged and want to come to school. He believed that teachers in TV/ film reflected this:

The young kid in Year 8 with the deep voice who did a speech was really sweet, but again it's them picking and choosing what they want to show. And what's the reason behind this reality show? Is it to promote teaching, cos teaching's got bad...people don't respect teaching like before...but before it was few or cos they went to school to be educated compared to now where you just have to. Before you were lucky to be educated but now it's free and it's expected. The problem with society is that everything's expected. It's cos it's free so people feel they can be more critical. There's a divide of people who expect more. Parents want the best for their children so they can succeed, but some parents and

their children, not so wealthy, see coming to school as a chore not a privilege. The value should be the outcome but going through the system they don't know the value.

### Teacher-student relationships (RQ3)

From the reality documentaries, Clarence mentioned examples of teachers being personable, gentle and warm such as the Headteacher and students in *Educating Yorkshire*, so respect for him was evident in the documentary. Although he initially had a negative opinion about reality documentaries, Clarence regarded teacher-student relationship as well-portrayed in the programmes:

Some of the *Educating Yorkshire* was really inspirational. It's again that personable...he was gentle, kind and could talk to people, and he had a really good rapport with all the students so there was one episode when a girl wouldn't talk to him so he went and spoke to her mate who went and spoke to her and then the next day she spoke to him. She did have respect for him, and he knew how to access it.

However, he was not sure how realistic this portrayal was as it could have simply been what was decided to be shown on TV, and not what the reality may actually be:

I don't know the teachers so I don't know if it realistically portrayed the teachers. I'm a bit of a sceptic. He came across as really good, or was he? And the kid with the stutter and the deputy head who put the headphones on to help him, but once again, the cameras are there so how much does your personality change? How staged was it?

He drew upon a comment he heard on the radio in the morning about teachers getting firsts in their degree, but he claimed that knowledge was not teaching and only accounted for '10% of teaching'. He claimed to be comfortable with a teacher who did not have a degree because it was delivery which was key, and it was essential to gain the attention of the students:

The class of degree doesn't matter. There's a difference between knowledge and teaching. It's how you deliver it. It's the main aspect because that's how you get the attention which goes back to the inspirational ones I mentioned cos they capture your

attention. They're really personable cos teaching is a two-way dialogue. It's not just talking to someone. There's a response.

Clarence was aware of outside sources that could put a strain on teacher-student relationships as he felt the government pressures and accountability meant he had less control of his own outcomes, and because of the level of accountability, the students also felt the pressure. It made him feel he was doing the GCSE rather than supporting the student to achieve because they wished to.

#### Conclusion:

Clarence was able to discuss specific teacher **attributes** of the teacher images in media, for example passion and continuing one's own professional development, as features of his own professional teacher identity which are important to him and how he **presents** himself to his students (Goffman, 1990; Gergen, 1991). He also described these particular teacher images as 'inspirational' to him as a teacher, although these attributes may be 'magnified' in comparison to reality. The images he struggled to comment on were ones who he claimed lack inspiration as educators, and lack strong **teacher-student relationships**. He did not enjoy reality documentaries, but was able to comment in depth on some examples of teacher-student relationships in *Educating Essex* and *Educating Yorkshire*. He was able to pick out example and **relate back to his own interactions** with students (Weber and Mitchell, 1995; Fisher et al., 2008). Clarence also discussed **social conditions** (Giddens, 1991; Maclure, 1993; Goodson, 2013) as a factor that can affect professional teacher identities, especially linked to teacher-student relationships once again. Social conditions play a role in much of his narratives especially when he discussed different types of schooling and how education has changed over time.

#### Michelle

Michelle was a teacher in the SEN department with 16 years teaching experience and had been teaching in this particular school for 10 years. She taught small groups of students who were removed from lessons during scheduled times from their lessons. Michelle had two areas of responsibility including deputy SENCO and deputy head of year for year 7. At the time of this research, she solely



focused on her SENCO role. She described herself with a fluent narrative, but one that was lacking confidence in her professional teacher identity. She put this down to being a perfectionist in her teaching role which seemed to stem from a family with high expectations:

I am a perfectionist. And I am also thinking about me growing up, schooling and how my parents dealt with things, and a '2' was good but if anything like an E got home it was a major fuss so the emphasis at home was always...there was a lot of love, but more on the negative, and I was also a sensitive soul and it just carried on with me.

Reassurance from friends and her title of Deputy in charge of the SEN department seem to alleviate the negativity she expressed in her professional teacher identity, but the lack of confidence was a theme throughout Michelle's narratives in both the first and second phase of interviews. It is important to note that between the first interview and the second, Michelle had been on maternity leave for the birth of her second child. On returning, her role had altered being more involved in the SEN department, and her time spent with her children had increased, thus reducing the time she spent recreationally watching television and films. As a result, there were many images Michelle had never come across before.

Teachers' interpretations of teacher images in media (RQ1) and the use of teacher images as a vehicle to express their professional teacher identity (RQ2).

### **Television and Film:**

On being presented with the images of fictional teachers, Michelle firstly pointed out *Dead Poets Society* which, for her, demonstrated the idea of not giving up and finding alternative ways of teaching. She saw this as similar to herself with students who cannot always access the learning. This led Michelle onto discussing the burden of the new SEN measures and workload, and then details of a course she had completed focusing on dyslexia. While reflecting on teaching methods she admired in media, she gave reasons why it was not feasible to achieve the standards depicted in media; pressures of planning lessons was evident in her narrative. She moved onto other teacher images she recognised:

Obviously I recognise the *Harry Potter* ones though not a fan but I do know them. *Dangerous Minds*, of course. That was ages ago. *Bad Teacher*. I wanted to watch that cos she was in it but never got round. Oh, *Glee*. Everyone knows about *Glee*. I don't know who these are (points to other images).

One aspect of Michelle's narrative that was evident in other teachers' narrative, was Michelle's anxiety throughout the interview; she was very conscious of 'being correct' with her responses. This was exacerbated by not knowing many of the fictional teacher images. Emotions were evident in her narrative when she pointed out *Waterloo Road* as a programme that angered her. She built this point up throughout the interview, returning to her feelings about the show often:

I don't watch a lot of TV but, I know *Waterloo Road* (laughs). There are snippets that are real like the set up, and little groups of students, students interacting, some of the behaviours displayed. I mean, it's compressed. I suppose if you take all of the students, you'll find one storyline but it's so compressed. What's annoying, if you're in the profession yourself, you'll be annoyed of how some of the teachers are portrayed, like coming across as lazy. It peeves you off cos you think the people who watch it are like, you know, that's how it is. Although, you know, it's the same as hospital dramas and workplace dramas.

Michelle demonstrated she was aware of her own professional teacher identity while watching teacher images in media. Here Michelle described if the programme one watched focused on the profession one was in, it was more likely for the individual to be affected by the content. Michelle proceeded to give examples of the points she raised with increasingly emotive descriptions:

The interaction between staff [in *Waterloo Road*] is the mirror image of what is going on with the students, but hopefully 89% of the people are people and professionals. I've watched a bit there and there, more active in the first series but my time now is too precious. I like watching a good film but series which go on, thinking, 'come on you can't tell that many stories'. It's just...it just annoys me!

Although the other teachers in this research pointed out Mrs Krabappel in *The Simpsons* classifying her as unrealistic, Michelle felt that Mrs Krabappel was like teachers she had known in Germany who had a civil servant status, where their body language was very relaxed much like the image Michelle was presented with where Mrs Krabappel was leaning back with her feet up on the desk. This could highlight some cultural differences in teaching:

*The Simpsons* one. It's like the old-school mentality like teachers in Germany cos they're civil servants, not like here. They don't need to prove anything after qualifying. They come in as young, enthusiastic teachers but it wears off. There's no incentive to move on, no levelling or target-setting.

In her spare time, Michelle was a keen yoga member. She was able to see the role of a yogi as a teaching role also. She chose Mr Miyagi likening him to her yoga teacher with his calming approach. By this point of Michelle's narrative, she was no longer reflecting on herself but teachers she knew. It was only when she discussed teacher-student relationships as part of her profession did she reflect back to herself as a teacher. This is discussed more under RQ3.

Michelle then discussed how she liked films but she did not pursue watching a film because there was a teacher in it. She believed she did not reflect back on herself when she saw a teacher in a film. However, she did recognise some of the images eventually and reflected on her own professional teacher identity as well as her past student identity. She mentioned *Notes on a Scandal* which reminded her of when she studying in Germany. These images, she described, were 'not-so-good role models':

I wouldn't go out of my way to watch teacher films. I don't go out of my way in a sense to straight away reflect on my profession as such. I wouldn't put myself in that sort of category like if I was watching *Harry Potter*. I'm trying hard to think of a film or scene where it's about the teacher or teaching. The one with Judi Dench where she's got an affair, you don't have...Notes on a Scandal. I say it cos our Spanish teacher started affairs with two of the students...the boys, and it, you know, I was not in a good place at the

time, but you remember films at the time those things are happening and that was the film at the time. It wasn't that much of a deal then as it would be now, but there was another teacher...I liked him...it was similar to our sixth form centre. This other teacher smoked outside with the smokers and spoke about A Level work but I wasn't part of that so was left out. Hmm, not so great role models in my day.

When asked about how realistic the teachers in TV and film were, Michelle stated that they all have attributes of a teacher but there was not such a thing as one particular type of teacher. She continued to discuss how films point out the obvious and 'make images bigger and exaggerate specific attributes' whereas 'film and soaps are an art form'. She expressed that the lack of reality was part of the art form. However, she commented that programmes like *Waterloo Road* could result in some students forming false perceptions of teachers:

They all have attributes. It's not...I find that difficult cos there's no such thing as one particular teacher. I believe you should have certain attributes which help you cope with the profession to make you a better teacher, but I wouldn't say we all display them, and then again not all teachers need to fulfil all of these cos students will find you depending on somebody they need, more compassionate or somebody to be more, whatever it is. So, in that sense they will all have some or they wouldn't be playing these teachers in the films, and no single teacher has all of them.

Michelle exhibited strong views and emotions towards the depiction of teachers in reality documentaries, TV and film when I asked her: Do you think they're accurate portrayals or not?

It's over the top. Yar, of course they are not! But that's what film does. It points out the obvious and makes it even bigger cos that won't make a good film. Certain things as a character will stand out but someone playing you would make these ones bigger because it makes a nicer watch. We're talking about an art form, film, and that's what they do, so if you are...if you watch TV or film with that mind-set then you know what they're doing. I know that's not how everyone watches TV and that's where the problem comes in, and

people think this is how it is, and that British schools are like *Waterloo Road*, but that's a bit...so it's not unfair, good or bad, but it's what film does or art does. It's what I expect of art. They make fun of certain things and criticise things. You can get annoyed knowing what kind of people are watching that, and you get angry cos you feel this is not how school is. It's not how it is in real life, so it gets you angry. *Waterloo Road* is one of them. You think, oh really? Maybe I'm naïve. Maybe it is happening, but you know, it's not. Sometimes when the SENs are portrayed you think, oh God, don't make it so stereotypical.

### **Reality Documentaries:**

Michelle believed that had has 'a right to criticise reality documentaries, but not TV and film as they are art forms which reality documentaries are not because of the claim to be real'. She believed that the reality documentaries were on TV as a desperate attempt to get more people watching and get money. She did not understand why people would want to be filmed while they were struggling like in *Tough Young Teachers*. She believed that teachers did not, nor did any profession, need reality documentaries. She thought they could be positive but she had not seen enough to make that judgement. It angered her more as it was her own profession being represented:

It's a natural...let's start before. They're coming out left, right and centre. It's not just about teachers. Even if it's about a call centre. You think, oh my God, can they make something out of this? By accident I watched *Tough Young Teachers* and *Educating Essex*, but I wouldn't go out...it's nothing to do with the teaching profession. I just don't like performed art. I just find my own life more interesting.

Michelle exhibited disbelief as to why people choose to participate in reality documentaries, again demonstrating her emotions towards filming in a school environment:

I felt for them, the RE and Science teacher, but why on earth did they decide to do that? Poor sods. Why on earth did you decide to start a new profession and agree to be filmed? It did show, you know, it was very realistic what they were going through and they met

up afterwards and discussed it. It was heart breaking in a way to see cos you thought, gosh, would I want to ever be filmed and, no, it's wrong in a way, not cos there's something to hide. It can have positive effects but for me, personally, I thought crazy you, why sign up for it? I remember *Educating Essex*...for a few minutes, but more from conversations, but don't know. I'm not that interested. I think they just cause confusion. It is called a reality show, but there's still someone who is a director and they get portrayed the way they fit into the programme not what is really...it can be positive like how things are dealt with, but not for me.

Clearly Michelle did not think that the reality documentaries were completely realistic although they were based on reality with actual teachers. Michelle, again, demonstrated elevating negative emotions towards reality documentaries, and defensiveness towards the teaching profession:

It's my profession; they're making it for an audience to hit their figures so it's not going to be real. I accept TV and film cos it's an art form, but reality documentaries are not real enough and viewers get drawn in due to the way it's made cos there's an agenda, and for young teachers...can give them false perceptions of how hard the job is. With one, how hard... he put in so much effort into one student. It's tricky. You need to be a fairly educated viewer to read between the lines, so there are people who could get it all wrong. I think there is room for reality documentaries but if it is poor quality, you have a right to criticise, but film and TV is different because it is an art form.

Michelle's final points were interesting. Although Michelle believed that the reality documentaries were for entertainment mainly and not to educate, she suggested that teachers would be the ones to relate better to these types of programmes as 'teachers are aware of the system, and in that sense educated in that profession'. The point she made about 'reading between the lines' did suggest reality documentaries about teachers allow teachers to reflect back to their profession and professional teacher identity in a knowledgeable manner rather than misinterpreting the messages conveyed. She could see the positive elements, but implied only teachers were likely to understand the content

rather than a non-teacher. Michelle concluded that it was safer for teachers to be watching teacher-based reality documentaries rather than non-teachers.

### Teacher-student relationships (RQ3)

As stated earlier, it was only when Michelle discussed teacher-student relationships as part of her profession did she reflect back to her professional teacher identity rather than focusing her narrative on others teachers she knew:

I think that for girls particularly...the way I think you get through them...if you've got that little personal...of course they don't need to know everything...it does help them, but in a group of 30 you can lose them but in inclusion you can get closer. You...you...you can do that with 30 but you have to put a little more effort into it, but it is different with the SEN students cos you can have those personal, little conversations. They will work harder for you and they will work better for you. And that caring element, that's SEN, isn't it, and inclusion. You don't always get it right but you try... but I feel, well, what I've experienced...you always want to do that better...so that element of caring...challenging...engaging them. That element is always there and that's always been in my nature...the caring.

She mentioned another example of a fictional teacher, a French teacher on *The Catherine Tate Show*.

Michelle felt the particular scene she described highlighted the frustrations teachers can have:

Catherine Tate. The teacher on that is one of my favourite. The French teacher. That's my favourite example. In the first instant you laugh about the student. The teacher is so patient and passionate about her subject, especially with me with my language point of view...five minutes of painful watching until the teacher just bursts. It's a lovely...where teacher and student are presented in a lovely way through comedy. It only works cos you're allowed to laugh about it, but when you're in the profession, a drama like

Waterloo Road...and you take the humour away, it becomes a bit thick on the ground cos it's the form of comedy as an art form, it works.

As with the other teachers, she also mentioned the comedy genre made the frustrations of teaching in media more accessible for viewers. This supported the idea that TV programmes and films with teachers were not necessarily thinking about teachers as an audience so were not made to inform but entertain because, although a viewer can be drawn into what Michelle considered a 'real' situation, the comedy format meant that the harsh reality of a misbehaving student was missed by a non-teacher.

From film, Michelle was drawn to the character of Mr Keating in *Dead Poets Society* describing him as compassionate accompanied by much dialogue with students out of the classroom. This was achieved through positive teacher-student relationships throughout the film:

The *Dead Poets Society*. What I liked about him was not giving up and finding alternative ways of teaching. I wouldn't say me being him, but I think these ways of finding students who can't access. I like that. Getting groups together and being compassionate. Hmm. There's a lot of taking it out of the classroom and finding links. Although we should all do that, it doesn't always happen. It can be difficult sometimes. You can't always do that. I aspire to do and admire anyone who can do that.

On returning back from maternity leave, it was evident that her identity as a mother is her priority as she mentioned often that she did not have the time to watch many of the television programmes and films, or reality documentaries discussed although still very aware of the images but not as fluent with the examples she contributed in her narrative. It was evident that her professional teacher identity was centred on teacher-student relationships due to the nature of her role at the school where a more personalised approach to teaching was important due to the needs of the students she works with. Thus she was able to support points she made about fictional teacher images with examples from her own practice with ease.



### Conclusion:

Michelle used the example of a scene from the Catherine Tate Show to express her experience of dealing with a misbehaving student in a language lesson. She commented that the comedy genre made the **challenges of teaching** accessible to all viewers and, **reflecting** back on her own professional identity (Weber and Mitchell, 1995; Fisher et al., 2008), presenting a difficult situation in a format which she is able to reflect less negatively upon, therefore dissipating any negative **emotions** (Hargreaves, 1998) that are linked to such a situation. The media images of teachers, although Michelle does not believe she knew many examples, do provide her with a **platform** to express her teaching style as well as her career trajectory linked to her professional teacher identity. Interestingly, Michelle is not a supporter of the reality documentaries but was still able to use any knowledge she did have of this programme format to **reflect back to her professional teacher identity**. The films and TV programmes she had not seen, on the other hand, proved more challenging for Michelle to make such links back to her professional teacher identity. She also acknowledged how other teachers may use teacher images in media in understanding their professional teacher identity, and described that there are **varieties of teacher identities** (Mead, 1934; Stryker, 1980) depending on the role that a teacher is **playing** (Goffman, 1990; Gergen, 1991).

### Martin

Martin worked in IT (information technology) since 2008 as a web developer and database manager before changing career direction to teaching. He began his teaching career as an RE teacher for two years, but later moved into teaching IT based on his work experience rather than an MPhil he had completed. Martin was in charge of Key Stage 4 and 5 IT which was part of the Faculty of Technology, although he still ran the IT department for the faculty. Martin taught in the same school from being at NQT in 2006. He had been in the school for 9 years, and when describing his professional teacher identity, Martin was confident, and also established an altered professional teacher identity depending on which year group he was teaching at a particular time:

I definitely want them to learn. I want them to become round people. I want them to become good people. I struggle not to do an awful lot of talking and lecturing. I can be quite argumentative which I struggle against as well. I am aware of these so I try to avoid this and get them to do as much as possible. I suppose I'm quite approachable, generally, but with the younger ones I get quickly frustrated, because they want to know if they can take their blazer off when I just don't care.

He described teaching as being in a facilitator role, which was his view of teaching in terms of its purpose. Martin associated his professional teacher identity with humour, but also frustration which could lead to arguments:

I know I am one of those facilitators. I remember we were using that a few years back and I remember I sneered at it but I know now it is a better way to teach. So I try to help them do their own learning. But where there are things that have to be done and it takes them 15 minutes to find out, if they find out at all, but I could just tell them immediately, I do hold myself back from lapsing into that teacher-led...but I like asking them lots of questions...I like asking these deep questions...why do you think this might be the case? What sorts of reasons do you think this might be the case? I love those sorts of things, but sometimes this can be a 15 minute discussion, and by the end they feel the frustration themselves and they're like, *just tell us!* So I like that kinda stuff, but I can be prone to just saying, here...but that's just time.

Martin came across quite negative in some of his narrative especially if change was due to take place, although he stated he would eventually comply. His teaching techniques were discussed, entwined with his professional teacher identity. He mentioned he was aware of the students' temperaments during tasks especially if they began to become wary. This caused him to reflect and alter his delivery and, thus, identity in his teaching role.

Teachers' interpretations of teacher images in media (RQ1) and the use of teacher images as a vehicle to express their professional teacher identity (RQ2).

### **Television and Film:**

Martin initially had difficulty placing some of the images of teachers in media. After some thinking time, he was drawn to Will Schuester from *Glee*. He did not elaborate on this teacher image until later as he swiftly pointed out other teacher images from TV and film, some he had never seen but was able to name the film or TV programme the image was associated with so there was evidence of recognition and exposure to these images other than watching them on TV and film, but not enough to discuss the image in depth, for example, *Dangerous Minds* and *Breaking Bad*. He returned back to *Glee* stating that *Glee* was 'not his thing', as one needs a level of enthusiasm and nurturing and caring traits as part of their teacher identity in order to be a teacher similar to those depicted in *Glee*. He found these images very unrealistic at this point of the interview.

I will admit to never having seen *Dangerous Minds*. She's fantastic, but I would admit to never seeing *Breaking Bad* either. *Glee's* not my type of thing but I'd suspect there are teachers who are quite *Glee* types with a level of enthusiasm, and I did see one or two of the first episodes of *Glee*. Very nurturing and caring, which I think is relatively unrealistic.

However, this altered later after some reflection. He claimed that teachers in *Glee* are so enthusiastic. He believed that it was due to the type of subject taught if someone was passionate and enthusiastic because exciting students as part of that role was important. Comparing subject, he claimed that standing on a stage and singing was different from doing extra reading for Geography. It was easier, he believed, to drive 'that type' of enthusiasm. He remembered no *Glee*-type teachers when he was at school; teachers were quite cynical. He pondered for a while between responses. Although claiming that *Glee* teachers were not realistic, he was able to draw similarities to two male Drama teachers at the school:

I would say Tom is quite like that. I mean, he's very enthusiastic and loads of time for the kids, and John is definitely one of these, anytime you want to come talk to me I'm here with crowds of kids behind him. But then again, I wouldn't necessarily say...they must be a like that, but they will follow them because there is a Drama thing or a show. There's a reason behind it. With some subjects it's the passion you have like the Geography department they like trips and cliffs, but they wouldn't go home and read about it but music and drama does touch people differently in different parts of the brain. It appeals to kids in a different way.

Passion for one's subject was mentioned as a trait important to one's professional teacher identity, but in relation to drama teachers. Martin described them having a level of enthusiasm and 'must be a bit like that themselves' implying that their personal identity must be integrated with their professional teacher identity. He stated that:

You couldn't have a quiet, stand-offish drama teacher and get the same passion from the students; you have to model the subject with that type of subject. It's a hard question, because teachers have a particular style, and are quite straightforward. They're usually pretty dedicated, but generally teachers are not all the same. I suspect some are realistic like on *Waterloo Road* they don't focus on the style of the teacher, only the personalities cos it's a drama. There has to be something spectacular about the teacher in order for it to be about the teacher only. So they are dramatic or comedy characters.

Returning back to the images of teachers in media, Martin considered Yoda from *Star Wars* as an image of a teacher he would like to model himself on. Initially was conveyed in a humorous manner, but he then admitted that he considered he had an 'inflated ability to pass on wisdom' but did not believe it always worked with school children. His aspiration to be like Yoda was considered unrealistic but not because this was a teacher image from media but seemed to relate to the constraints of teaching larger groups of students rather than one-to-one interactions. He then focused on Perez from *The Wire* who he discussed was a policeman on the show before going into teaching. He found this

character much more idealistic than himself in terms of teaching. He regarded the character portrayal as 'very well done' especially with the realisation from the character's perspective that teaching is a lot tougher than one anticipates. He also discussed how *The Wire* also depicted the social problems linked to the students and being a teacher very well, highlighting the impact society can have on both student identities and professional teacher identities. He repeated that a character like Perez was very idealistic, yet patient, yet desperate to make a change. However, in trying to make a change Perez fails many times. This, Martin viewed as more true to life compared to other teacher images who may achieve a great deal in a very short space of time. Perez's issues were realistic to Martin and his progress could be tedious to achieve as with teaching in real life:

The guy out of *The Wire*. He was previously a policeman, given *The Wire* is gritty and real. He thought he could go in and make a difference. He is more idealistic than me, he thought he could go in and make a social change and it was done really well actually, cos he discovered that things were quite tough. He was obviously in a school that's very, very different to ours properly, you know, a rough area with massive social problems, but I thought that was really well done cos I think there are lots of people out there that really do think, oh yeah, I could just go and change kids and say things to them, and sometimes it's just about caring but it's more than that. He is more idealistic and patient than I would be cos he was desperate to make a change and seeing things fail in front of him. He was persistent.

This part of the interviews triggered personal memories from when Martin was sat at the dinner table with his parents, both teachers, and conversations ensued of what had happened at work that day. He remembered being fully aware of teaching not being an easy job; there were many compromises to make. 'It's a very difficult job but you have to do the best you can'. He discussed how teachers could not be perfectionists in the job, as 'kids are not perfect themselves' implying that fictional teacher images may portray teachers as perfectionists which only puts pressure on teachers in real life. He was also exposed to training which encouraged a perfectionist mentality as a teacher:

I knew it was a different job and you had to accept compromises and do as best as you can, so this conversation was, is it important to be a perfectionist, and my response was you cannot be a perfectionist cos a kid can always turn to you and say they're not gonna do it. I was told that was the wrong response, and that you have to be, you know, a perfectionist. You have to strive for perfection all the time, and I thought that was rubbish at the time and I remember telling my mum about it and she roared with laughter. I believe with this job you have to have to do what you can. It's good to have expectations and it's good to have ideals. There's no point going into teaching and drift along, cos you do have to try with some kids, but if you are a perfectionist you will become disillusioned and disaffected really quickly, and I've seen young teachers come into the profession and get disillusioned.

Martin highlighted the lack of realism amongst teachers in reality, thus away from media. As is evident from the quote above, part of Martin's professional teacher identity was to be aware of the unpredictable; being able to adapt was important for a professional teacher identity. Being disillusioned was noted by Martin amongst teachers new into the profession, highlighting a difference with professional teacher identities depending on whether teachers are novices, veterans or in between. Other teachers in this research also pointed this out, but usually reflecting on their personal memories of themselves rather than observations of colleagues as Martin had.

Martin explained that all teachers have a particular style but is not 'dramatically' different from one another like it may be in media. He also pointed out changes that had occurred in teacher training, including pressures from inspections, which could affect the level of enthusiasm and passion a teacher can convey in their professional teacher identity. He compared these pressures to how teaching was in the past:

It was different to 30 years ago, cos training was a particular way and schools will restrict the way we do the job and with OFSTED things are quite standardised so can't be just like these in film. I think years ago teachers were different and didn't have the same processes

of assessment, unless something awful happened you will continue to work in the school.

There wasn't a strict inspection regime, unless exam results were bad year after year.

Martin thought of himself as old-fashioned and pointed to Mr Chips and Hector from *The History Boys*, although unable to name the specific characters. He went on to discuss how '20 years ago', teachers thought teaching would be like *Dead Poets Society*, which he regarded as unrealistic unless in a private school setting where children are constantly being pushed at home academically as well as in the classroom. However, he said that 'many of our kids go home to more of a life which isn't education...not mulling over academics'. This emphasised the difference in social classes of students as well as changes to what can be achieved in different types of schools:

I think I can be like this one (points at Mr Chips) only in the sense that I can be old-fashioned but other than that, no. There's some strange ideas in *The History Boys* about how education works and the point of education. It was a very odd story. There are barrier issues there, I thought. For 20 years people thought it was all gonna be *Dead Poets Society*, but it's never like that, maybe in some private schools it's like that, but it's very unrealistic. In some private schools you can have very small classes, and if you are in a school where the kids are probably not supported at home compared to being pushed at home, then that will probably change everything about what you can achieve in class. Although this was about changing the kids' lives, it was about changing the kid's attitudes to poetry than the actual academics, but in state schools, the kids have an awful lot more going on in their lives so it's probably quite rare, maybe in boarding schools where there is no outside life, but I don't think many of our kids go home mulling over academic things like that. To some extent it would be nice to be like that, but I have no urge to go into private school, but I believe in strong state school education. I am here to teach the ones that don't have the privileges in *Dead Poets Society*.

### **How images of teachers have changed:**

I have added this extra sub-headed section for Martin as he explained in great detail about changes in the images of teachers. It was important to note that other teachers have also discussed this although more briefly in comparison. Martin stated that years ago teachers were very different and 'just taught' unless something awful was happening, which was not often. He considered media images of teachers to have changed, so this could mean that society's impression of teachers and teaching had also changed, but this was not in-line with the changes that were actually happening. Martin went on to discuss that when he reads articles or hears about teachers in the news or social media, the impression he got was that there is a lack of respect for teachers (much like the other teachers, comments on fictional and non-fictional media weave together in the narrative). However, he believed this was true of all professions as the public are constantly being told what their rights are so there was an individualistic point of view from the public about many professions, not only teaching. He gave further examples of students assessing lessons, highlighting an 'owing me' service, which was unlike the education system previously:

The media teachers and society's impression of teachers have changed. People say they couldn't do my job, and they admire me, but when you read in the newspapers and comments on websites when there are strikes, people seem to not have any respect for teachers. I dunno what to make of that, but I suppose every profession has less respect from society than they used to because nowadays we are constantly being told what our rights are so there is a constant individualistic look at everything so what society owes me I should get. I think in education we are making that mistake of constantly asking kids to assess lessons and so on. I've been places where people come in for job interviews and the kids are asked what they think.

Martin, again, used different terms to describe the role of the teacher. This time he moved from the teacher he is (a facilitator) to what others may believe teaching to be ('servants now, masters before'):



I think now we're more servants than we used to. We used to be more masters, well sort of. There used to be a blind respect for many professions but those days are gone. So the media is less likely to have teachers who are very, very good. I think I do have the impression, our teachers weren't chummy and friendly but now they are, but I think that's a society thing, I mean you don't have someone now sitting there in a suit and tie telling you things. You have to have a fair bit of conversation sitting on a sofa not a behind a desk, but I think that's a general thing where things are relaxed so less professional, meaning less strict and distance way.

**So do you think these films and TV shows are reflecting that?**

Quite possibly, to some extent, cos if you look at the ones that are quite modern like the Harry Potter stuff, it's kind of, it's very old-fashioned in its look but they are relaxed and involved with the kids and relaxed.

Martin's narrative highlighted the different capacities teachers have demonstrating multiple identities as part of their professional teacher identity. He described that teachers are more servants now and masters then, with less respect for teachers now so the media is less likely to have teachers on television and films as good as they were before. This, he believed was due to a change in society's expectations of teaching.

**Reality Documentaries:**

When we moved onto reality documentaries, Martin spoke about *Educating Essex* and *Educating Yorkshire* with great passion claiming he 'loved those shows'. He thought the representation of teachers and what a school was like was very good, including how tough, yet rewarding, teaching can be. He gave, as with many of the teachers in my research, the example of the boy with the stutter and the struggles he needed to overcome. Martin was looking forward to the next set of the *Educating...* series. He admired the Deputy Head in *Educating Essex* who he thought had a very good attitude with the students while still being strict. He said he did not mind the Head teacher in *Educating Yorkshire* but he felt he was being deliberately 'bloke-ish', thus presenting a false professional teacher identity.

However, he felt his interactions with the students were great. Martin thought *Educating Yorkshire*, was less about being a teacher but more about being a manager of a school. Nevertheless, Martin was 'very keen on the show'. He focused mainly on the teacher-student relationships that were depicted on these types of television programmes which is discussed under the heading of research question 3 (RQ3) which follows.

### Teacher-student relationships (RQ3)

Martin had mixed views about teacher-student relationships. On one hand he did not approve of being too familiar with students, and students asking personal questions in reality. He would rather focus on the purpose of his role as a teacher. However, when discussing teacher images in media, he believed the television programmes that portrayed the in-class relationships between teachers and students were far more realistic as opposed to those that depicted a teacher in a 'caricature manner' or a 'teacher who makes very grand gestures to assist in students rapidly progressing like in *Dead Poets Society*'. Below is an extract from his first interview where Martin discussed his professional teacher identity and how this came into conflict with his own personal identity:

The older they are the more comfortable I feel I can act a certain way around them but I wouldn't swear. I once told a class to shut up and I remember being furious with myself. They did deserve it. Even one of them said, along the lines of, *we sometimes forgot teachers are human*. Um, but I don't like the idea of swearing in front of them, and I am quite a sweary person, and I don't like telling them about my personal life either, like if I was off they ask, 'where were you?' None of your business (laughs), but I know an awful lot of teachers that do tell them absolutely everything about themselves. I'm not like that. I don't think it matters.

Whilst discussing images of teachers in reality documentaries, teacher-student relationships were more apparent in Martin's narrative. He was not sure about *Tough Young Teachers* in terms of the way the teachers portrayed themselves; he felt that the trainee teachers spoke to the students too

personally too often so conflict between teacher and student would build. Martin put this down to forgetting that there are barriers that exist between teacher and student which are necessary:

I totally loved *Educating Essex* and *Educating Yorkshire* and fairly good representations of how tough it can be in schools and how rewarding it can be. *Tough Young Teachers*, I wasn't sure about it. They built it up to break down the barrier between teacher and student, and built up conflict too much. They kept interviewing the kids when he got chucked out so it built up drama for the kid so it was less realistic. It was interesting to see what it's like starting out as a teacher, so the viewers might be more aware of the pressures we have. I liked the Deputy Head in *Educating Essex* and he was very joking with the kids but fair. I liked the way he talked about the job. With *Educating Yorkshire*, I liked the Head teacher but I did feel he was being deliberately bloke-ish compared to the Essex school, but it was more about how they interacted with the kids especially the ones who needed more attention. It was less about the teaching and more about the management and relationships with the kids.

Martin believed the purpose of reality documentaries was to engage an audience including teachers and non-teachers. Some particular situations may frustrate teachers such as the production team interviewing a particular student as soon as they are removed from the class following an incident with a teacher according to Martin. This 'turned a typical real-life situation in a school into a drama, therefore extracting the realism from the scene'. As mentioned in my literature review, this is a common device used in reality documentaries (taking characters aside for one-to-one conversations). These one-to-ones not only provided reflection time for the specific character to be shared to viewers, but also allowed the viewer to reflect more deeply on the scene they have just witnessed. However, depending on who the one-to-one interview is with, it may manipulate a viewer's opinion in a variety of ways. Martin did, however, think the show was effective at conveying how difficult it can be in the early stages of a teaching career.

### Conclusion:

There was evidence of **narrative learning** in Martin's narratives (Goodson et al., 2010), gradually progressing from describing media images of teachers to eventually **reflecting** on his own professional teacher identity by the end of the interview phases (Weber and Mitchell, 1995; Fisher et al., 2008). The main themes which arose in his narrative were being **adaptable** as a teacher **adaptable** (Buckingham, 2008; Goodson et al., 2010) especially through **societal changes** (Giddens, 1991; Maclure, 1993; Goodson, 2013), including changing attitudes of students. **Personal memories** (Ben-Peretz, 1995; Goodson, 2010) are also used often in Martin's narratives especially relating back to his own parents who are teachers. By the final phase of the interviews, Martin is able to combine his narrative about his professional teacher identity using personal memories and teacher images in media.

### Erin

Erin was the Deputy Head of the school and also a Food Technology Teacher with 15 years teaching experience during the time the research was conducted. Erin was a newer addition to the sample of teachers, so I began with finding out her most favourite teacher, least favourite teacher, and how she would describe herself as a teacher. This also included why she joined the teaching profession. Her most favourite teachers included Mrs Kerney. She describes her as being 'hard to me; if it was wrong, it would make me cry'. The teacher had high expectations but she loved the subject. She mentioned that her memories of teachers were mostly from secondary school upwards as her parents moved for their job which was running hotels. She was, in total, in 11 primary schools. She remembered her history teacher who was funny and sarcastic. She enjoyed history but 'he talked at the class most of the time'. She was not sure what she learnt, but what she liked was that he loved his subject. At university she remembered a lecturer called Stella, who she is still friends with now. She was 'down-to-earth and interested' in Erin's interests in food linked to finance and culture. Stella used a lot of questioning but also challenged the decisions Erin made. Erin liked this. However, she found that also

frustrating at times as a piece of work would never be finished if it could be questioned further. She tries this technique often with her own classes never seeing a piece of work a student has produced as finished. Erin also tried different techniques for lessons every year. Her least favourite teacher was her geography teacher, and her maths teacher. Her geography teacher had class copying off the board in silence. He did not elaborate on points which she found frustrating. However, she did go on to A Level geography. Her maths teacher is described as 'mean'. She remembers the class having to stand in a line to get test results and if you were in the bottom 4, you were branded as 'hopeless'. There was an anxiety of humiliation. Her food science teacher at university was also a negative memory. Erin felt that she had to teach students as a side line to her research, so the sessions were often rushed, she was not interested in students' ideas. She was often dismissive and offhand with her comments. She did not want to be there. 'It was a process'.

Erin described her professional teacher identity as 'enthusiastic, fair and thinks about teaching the same things but in different ways each time [she plans her] lessons'. She tries to link back to other topics because that is how she likes to work. This would include linking back to skills and content. She considered herself as 'routined' but she believed all teachers were. She could tend to over-plan and over-help lower ability groups. She believed this led to them becoming lazy, as she could be too nurturing at times. She had a fear of letting the students down. When she became a teacher, she believed it was a fluke. She had a research job for 2 years after university with Leeds city council. She got as far as publishing for conferences. She had to lead undergraduate workshops which she enjoyed. She spoke about there not being many research jobs, and no one being too interested in her research area. She then worked in the city selling contracts for sugar but hated it. She thought about teaching after this. Up until that point she did find her jobs quite lonely as she preferred working in a team.

Teachers' interpretations of teacher images in media (RQ1) and the use of teacher images as a vehicle to express their professional teacher identity (RQ2).

When shown the teachers in TV and film, she initially felt she did not recognise any of them. She eventually pointed out teacher images after a pause. She began with *Dangerous Minds*, and said she felt the same when working in Acton. It was a culture shock for her going from Cornwall to experiencing black-on-black racism. Now she can recognise different groups but at that particular school she had to be aware of the difference between Jamaican and Somalian students who were having an on-going feud. The students also believed she could not do anything much as she was white. Michelle Pfeiffer's character in *Dangerous Minds* had to go through the same, according to Erin. Especially with recognising poverty and how to deal with students like this:

Now this is quite interesting, *Dangerous Minds*, cos at the time I was working at a high school and the way she felt in that programme is the way I felt there. When I first moved to London it was in White City, and I'm from Cornwall which is a very white place, and one of the first things I had to face was this horrible black on black racism at this school at the time. I remember feeling, like now I can recognise different black groups, and there was a fight between Jamaican and Somalian groups. It was really horrible. You had to recognise who was in each group, and being able to challenge kids on racism, and being a white woman, they just thought what would I know? It was a massive learning curve. I remember watching this film and being interested in her because she was quite gutsy, but it was also about poverty. Having that recognition...the uniform disguises that poverty thing.

*Freedom Writers* was another motivating film and book for Erin. She believed this fictional teacher image was similar to her as a middle-class teacher going into a multi-cultural school and celebrating cultural identity. Erin felt strongly that things should be equal and everyone should have aspirations and feel important especially teenagers. She spurred her on to start a projects in her last school using community elders. The project was called 'food and feasts'. Students wrote poems about the meaning

of food for them linked but to their cultural heritage. She spoke for 10 minutes about how the film which was also a book inspired this school project:

*Freedom Writers*, she was quite interesting. I can't remember if I watched the film or read the book first. It's interesting the idea of giving students a slight aspiration outside...how do you...for students whose parents...may not both worked, or don't see the value of education. I was quite inspired by her as a teacher, cos she was a middle class white woman who'd come to the school and appeared to be a do-gooder, and because of where she was teaching in America...it was a multi-cultural school, that idea that I'm white and clever and you're not; she tried to break down those barriers and the idea of freedom writing and writing in a book and giving yourself some self-worth and self- value I really liked, and to celebrate your identity and not see your culture as a block. I think that's...I'm quite interested in that. I feel quite strong that everything should be equal, and often in families where there isn't a lot of money, they lose the value of education and often it can seem somewhat unobtainable. I feel...I don't like that.

Freedom Writers had a very strong societal influence on Erin according to her narrative, and this was also an important to her when she ventured to create a cohesive environment within the school she was teaching in:

Unless you make people feel important, they just give up, particularly teenagers, so the *Freedom Writers* book helped start a whole project in my last school getting in community elders and it was called food and feasts and how to celebrate it.

Erin then spoke negatively about representations of teachers in media moving onto her second example. She pointed out that no one in *Waterloo Road* is like her or anyone she knows:

No one I know is like anyone on *Waterloo Road*. It's just dreadful and silly. *Teachers* is more realistic although it's ranked up is comedy, there is a human element I really liked. It gave the teachers a human element, and they loved the kids and that's why they stayed in teaching. That one from *Glee* loves the kids also. He's always trying to find funding.

He's someone I quite like. You know I haven't seen *Dead Poets Society*. I know people who are passionate about students like (AHT); it's always yes and then deal with the logistics later whereas (deputy head teacher) will put in all the barriers and you have to problem-solve that. We did have a History teacher who was like this bumbling idiot in *Waterloo Road*.

Although *Glee* and *Dead Poets Society* have been considered exaggerated by some of the teachers in this research, Erin was able to pick out teachers similar to the teacher images in these television programmes and films. She described *Teachers* as far more realistic and had a human element although the comedy is 'ranked up'. She also pointed out that they go to the pub and that is still part of being a teacher (the social side of one's professional teacher identity). Finally, Erin likened herself to three teacher images in media focusing on their belief in their students:

Well I'd like to think I'm like Will as in a try really hard when planning cos I'm constantly thinking about the students, and like her in *Dangerous Minds*, believing all students can do well in school and I will go back and think about my lessons. I had a challenging Year 11 class with all the statemented kids. They weren't naughty but difficult to engage. I sometimes felt like I failed them. They had to leave the class to do more English and Maths so the class reduced to 11. I was a bit disappointed. What's important is reviewing and reflecting all the time, cos sometimes...like the NQTs plan for hours, cutting out bits of paper and telling students the next day, you will do this activity. And you will get those knockbacks, particularly in *Freedom Writers*, she's crying but picks herself back up, cos you can take it personally or say, right we're going to be doing this. I do try to do this. I think that's important. If children like what they're doing, they look after their book and the moment that goes then you have to rethink it.

Erin believed that elements of the teachers in TV and film have realistic elements to them, with the exception of *Waterloo Road*. Once again, varied aspects to a professional teacher identity is outlined:



I think elements of them are realistic, but *Waterloo Road* is just silly playing real stereotypes. I find that all a bit silly. There was one where the head teacher accepted a bribe from a student, and I just lose patience with that. When I started teaching, teachers reflected the teaching I was part of. I remember there was a lot of staff who smoked in this old gym and I went there to hang out with them. They all cared about the kids but ran to the pub after (*Teachers*). You do need all types for a school to function. It can be hyped up, but the stories can be true like the poverty issues in *Freedom Writers*.

Erin concluded that every school needs different types of teachers and in TV and film they are all different, just 'hyped up' highlighting that media images of teachers are likely to be exaggerated versions of real teachers. She felt that teachers were portrayed badly in the press, and everyone went to school so they do all have an opinion. Her narrative weaved non-fictional and fictional media much like some other teachers in this research commenting that the 'news portrays teachers quite badly, quite lazy and quite unionised'.

Erin felt that the reality documentaries were good for the public to see how much teachers do and how much teachers do care. She liked, in particular, the deputy head in *Educating Essex*. *Tough Young Teachers* was also interesting for her as it showed the type of student/trainee teachers that might be coming through the system. She particularly focused on how that would affect the type of training she would need to deliver to staff who seemed to be more arrogant although more able than previous teachers:

On the backlash of people thinking teachers have an easy life, it was eye-opening for people to see it's different from when they went to school, to see what you deal with day to day rather than what they experienced at school. This brought the more inclusive element of what teaching is about. Like there's a teacher who is leaving here but she just wants to teach clever students, because she went to private school and didn't realise there were kids like this. There was an intensity. They worked hard. They couldn't believe how much work they had to do, and seeing the scrutiny when things went wrong. For

some reason, it's personal. It's difficult to separate the lesson from the person. You have to dissociate the person from the lesson. There's a divide line between the professional and...it's difficult especially if you're passionate, that's why you're doing it, but you have to think about what was it about the lesson that didn't go well, not that so and so was in a bad mood.

Later Erin described that what had impacted on her personal identity was different from what had impacted on her as a teaching professional, especially in her role as a deputy head:

I don't think they impacted on me to be that person, but it made me think how to change the CPD path as these are the mind sets of what's coming in as an NQT, and how to manage that. I want to do training on how to teach in this school. That did make me think about that.

#### Teacher-student relationships (RQ3)

Erin considered herself to be a reflective teacher. She puts students at the heart of what they are doing, motivating them and driving them to succeed, much like *Freedom Writers* especially as 'they have the energy and motivation and drive to get students back on board'.

From the reality documentaries, Erin pointed out the business studies teacher in *Tough Young Teachers* as a positive image of a teacher as he was always reflecting, and did not like the science teacher on the same television programme, as she spent too much time 'trying to be their mate!'

I know all of them. I think these have been quite interesting I watched the Yorkshire one.

My mum could not get over how much they cared, all the staff and it is constant. That's as it is, quite negotiating, quite nurturing, supporting, giving options. She thought that was unbelievable, so it did reflect how school life is. I like the Head teacher in that show and reminded me of (previous Head of Art). I did find annoying, and we do have people like that, the deputy head teacher who had some terrible skin thing and he was so desperate for kids to do well and wouldn't take time off work. That annoyed me, he is so

poorly but teachers and like that. The amount of people that have asked to get out of training this evening not because they're lazy but because they have kids in an exam next week or a kid's in a crisis and you think it's not just one person.

Here Erin was able to relate the images from the programme to teachers she had known previously in the same school. She commented that it was a common and a unique aspect of teachers' professional identities to put the student first before their own issues, even medical conditions. Working on the training of teachers in her current school, Erin was more attuned to the temperament of the trainee teachers and how that could link to their professional teacher identities, and her professional teacher identity as a leader in charge of training within the school:

This (*Tough Young Teachers*) was interesting (laughs). I found them all quite arrogant and the process knocked some of their arrogance. They came across like, well we're all very clever, and with the process of Teach First, well we'll teach for two years and we'll go and get a job in the city and earn £100,000. I think they felt they could come in and tell people what they wanted, and do what they liked. It brought to the surface that teaching is a skill. If you are a skilful teacher, you could teach whatever you wanted cos you could just set up the tasks especially lower school, but because they were clever there was an element of, we should be grateful and I think some teachers are like that. They don't seem to have the passion for teaching students. They've gone back to... well, I'm here to teach you so you better listen to me. It's not true of all teachers but the newer ones, like with some PGCEs you think why are you doing this?

Erin's comments highlighted the changing opinion trainees now have of teaching. Rather than a job they see it as a career path from teacher to head teacher, and how media in addition to this viewpoint could impact on teacher-student relationships which are essential to being a teacher:

These ones had a career path, whereas before people would just go into teaching to teach not aim for a purpose like be a head teacher. Maybe that's a good thing but needs to be nurtured better. It was a true reflection of what happens in a school. Like with her, she

didn't teach them so they ran around a lot, whereas the Maths teacher revisited everything. It was a good reflection of London schools cos you could understand why it was going wrong with them. I did like about the RE teacher cos he went back and reviewed which I quite liked, but the others, they got it all wrong, one thinking they could be their mate which was a disaster. The others wanted to make an impact on the students' lives.

Erin would like to work with the headteacher in *Educating Essex* due to his calm approach, and ability to empower people. She would also like to work with the deputy headteacher from *Educating Essex* especially in relation to behaviour management. The reasons seemed to be linked to teacher-student relationships, rather than pedagogy and practice. Throughout, there is reflection back to the general role of a teacher and Erin's professional teacher identity:

He makes it seem seamless, and they got great results. He really turned the school around. Obviously the Freedom Writers character I'd like to work with. I find it difficult to work with people who don't like to work with children, and I don't like that. It is difficult. You have to believe in children, same with Will. The guy who was a deputy head was so hilarious, like when there was a changeover he wheels out on his chair and barks and then wheels back to his funny self. You don't need a confrontation. You can be fun.

### Conclusion:

Erin was a **reflective** teacher who had been positively impacted upon by images of teachers in media. This had not only been in TV and film but also a book which was subsequently made into a film. Erin was confident in her narrative although her narrative did not alter from the start of the research until the end, thus this was a rehearsed yet stable narrative which Erin did not seem to reflect upon away from the interviews, hence her transcripts were very similar each time. This presented a **scripted**, stable narrative (Tomkin, 1979; Goodson et al., 2010) while also using media as a **stimulus** for expressing her own professional teacher identity (Weber and Mitchell, 1995; Fisher et al., 2008).

**Personal memories** (Ben-Peretz, 1995; Goodson, 2010) were also important in Erin's narratives

especially when discussing her role at her previous school using the example of *Freedom Writers* as a platform for her narrative.

### Drew

Drew was a Graphics and Technology teacher. She was also the head of department for the Technology faculty. Drew had been teaching for 12 years in the same school, but left briefly during this time to do supply teaching after being promoted to second in department; the stress of the added responsibilities became overwhelming for her. She returned once she did supply work at some very difficult schools and an opportunity arose to return back as a full-time technology teacher. When describing herself as a teacher, the nature of her subject being one that gives students an instant feeling of achievement was evident:

I want all my lessons to be fun, and interactive, I want a child to feel a sense of progress but more achievement, and they're walking out with a smile on their face like (bangs fist in hand) I did that today!

Teachers' interpretations of teacher images in media (RQ1) and the use of teacher images as a vehicle to express their professional teacher identity (RQ2).

### **Television and Film:**

Drew was able to pick out teacher images in media and finds similarities to teachers she knew. The stricter teachers in *Grange Hill*, for example, reminded her of her History teacher Mr Corker as he consistently had his 'game face' on. Drew then described other teacher images and confidently likened them to teachers she knew:

Maybe he's like (head teacher) cos she is always smiling compared to head teachers in other schools, she has that connection to the kids in the school. It's a recent thing but she is more relaxed and judged the situation a bit better and realised what the school actually needs.

There are teachers like that where everything is always the kid's fault, and my personal life is more important, and that's a teacher!

She described how, just like some of the media image, there were teachers who were not in the profession for the right reasons, conveying negative professional teacher identities for some teachers. She then described her teaching techniques similar to Mr White in *Breaking Bad* who was passionate about his subject. This was an important trait of her own professional teacher identity which she believed a good teacher should always exhibit:

I wouldn't say I am like her but the way she cares so much, I'm like the one in *Dangerous Minds*. I just want to help the kids so much. I am also like Mr Belding cos he's friendly and approachable. I watched *Breaking Bad*, and I have that passion for my subject, and in *Dead Poets Society* and getting the kids around you, and getting them involved. For example I had Erin's lesson and they are a difficult class, and make sure there's no gaps cos they have a poor attention span. You have to adapt depending on the type of class you have. You can be more fluid with top set but not bottom sets. *Bad Teacher* is not how I would teach or that strict one from *Grange Hill*. They need to see glimpse of your personality. There's commanding but then there's putting up a barrier which doesn't work. Any professional can take themselves too seriously but you're still a human being so you need to let your hair down. You get yourself into position and put your game face on but not all the time.

As was evident from her narrative, Drew pointed out images she was nothing like or wished not to be like as a teacher. She said that teachers should not take themselves too seriously and, again, save a 'game face' for lessons. This implied an act or mask presented as part of one's professional teacher identity. She believed that teachers can be stereotyped but that stereotype must come from somewhere. She gave the examples of one of the school's Assistant Head as an extreme, yet real teacher which every school needed in order to function. She discussed how the teachers in TV and film are more caricatured versions of real teachers, and real teachers' characteristics are similar but

subtler. She commented that the images of teachers were likely to be from personal memories the writers have of teachers they had. Fictional teacher images could therefore affect teachers and potential teachers, according to Drew.

### **Reality Documentaries:**

When discussing reality documentaries, Drew had watched many of them. She had strong views about *Tough Young Teachers* in particular, especially the teachers who were not doing well in their practice. She described Meryl as delusional and lacking the tools to be a good teacher. However, she did feel sorry for her when she was under scrutiny. Delusional seems to be a term some of the teachers in this research commonly use to describe novice teachers:

Meryl needed to move on with her life. I liked the teachers on this show that embraced their role and wanted to make a difference (TYT), but the science teacher stereotyped a student calling them a 'brethren'. I hate it when teachers think they should instantly respected. Meryl was just delusional without the tools or backbone.

Drew liked the geography and maths teachers because they seemed to be in teaching for the right reasons. However, she did not approve of the science teacher's behaviour towards the students particularly being too familiar. This example is discussed in more detail under RQ3.

She also pointed out that there was a socio-economic divide between some of the teachers and students, and that is where friction arose. She found the teachers' video diaries away from the classroom interesting where they seemed to have a different perception of themselves as teachers compared to what was being broadcast on TV. Therefore, there seems to be a conflict between perceived professional teacher identities and actual professional teacher identities from the viewers' points of view:

The other teacher who lives in Wimbledon wanted to show his worth and was so horrible to this young mixed raced boy. He wasn't well-behaved but he probably had his own issues outside of the classroom, but just had a go at him as soon as he walked in. He

needed to make him feel special in the lessons. He cried, that boy. You do not like him because of his background. You're comparing him to you and thinking you're better than him. The maths teacher got it right, but Meryl never got it right but it can be difficult with three people observing her. It was odd. They have a different perception of themselves as a teacher but they act a completely different thing. It's not being self-aware. It doesn't seem to go in the more people tell you. What can you do apart from moving on with your life?

In conclusion, Drew thought that *Tough Young Teachers* was a little too intense and could put people off teaching but the *Educating...* shows were far more realistic, although may have been a little saturated with the 'good bits' as she describes:

I think these films and TV shows represent teachers really well. I think teachers can be stereotyped but the stereotype must come from somewhere, and some people are in it for the wrong reason or I want to be in control and make them suffer, and there are teachers who just care so there are categories of teachers. It's a character we put ourselves in too. You can't have everyone just being happy and great, certain characters need to be there. I feel positive about the representations, although they are caricatures, but you can see what these people are from these pictures, like you can't have this energy everyday but it is a good representation because they are probably teachers they've had from visions of teachers. In real life it's just a little more subtle. I still watch programmes and think, gosh can there be teachers like that? They're key traits that these professionals have that you think, yes that is like teachers I know. Even the kids think that they can see similarities in what they see on TV and what teachers are like. Some can be over the top like *Waterloo Road* and teachers running away with their students, but it does or has happened.



Although positive with some aspects of the reality documentaries focused on teachers, she did comment that certain ways that reality documentaries are broadcast could affect potential teachers coming into the teaching professions. Drew gave the example of *Tough Young Teachers* once again:

If I saw this (*Tough Young Teachers*) as a PGCE I would never apply for it. It's horrendous and you're young and vulnerable. This (*Educating...*) you can think there is hope but this would make me think oh my god. You're showing the best bits and that it's a bit raw. Only from the eyes of a trainee the *Educating* one is doing it right, but not from the eyes of the teacher. There was another show with celebrities in the classroom and that showed the reality of how hard we work but this (*Tough Young Teachers*) showed how moany they were and how tired they were but welcome to teaching. You chose to take this route. The other shows is what it is like being in the classroom and the reality of the success stories.

As Drew was no longer in the early stages of her teaching career, she seemed to lack the empathy towards novice teachers.

### Teacher-student relationships (RQ3)

It was evident from the first interview with Drew that teacher-student relationships were very important to her as both a teacher and when she was a student at school. Drew did not appreciate teachers who were too regimented and did not take time to get to know her the way she gets to know the students she teaches now. When describing her least favourite teachers, the negative emotions surfaced focusing on their pedagogy and practice versus relationships with students, with some of her narrative directed at the teacher in question:

Get your text book out, go to page whatever and do this. So, alright, this is great! And there is just silence for the rest of the lesson. And it's clear, you're not really interested in what we've got to say or do; you're just interested in us getting the grades. We're not getting much direction. If we asked you a question, you'd get annoyed with us saying,

‘you haven’t listened or looked at my notes on the overhead projector’ and you’re like, well really, I just need a bit of support.

In contrast her favourite teachers were more involved with her, thus a more positive teacher-student relationship. She also linked back to personal memories of her own teacher-student relationships with her students as part of her professional teacher identity:

And the way the teacher taught it; it was more interactive. The difference in approach was much better. And not just the casual approach, but you weren’t told you were going to fail. Cos that can have an impact on a child. Like I had *Shannon* who can be difficult with members of staff but I had her in my lesson making cakes, had a product at the end.

Drew then reflected further on herself as a teacher, and her approach being personal and motherly:

I think I care a lot. I think I really care about that child who comes in my lesson, and if I see them a little bit sad it really upsets me and I always try and prise out what is it what’s made you not so happy in my lesson or out of it, and what can I do to change that? So I dunno I’m just caring I think; it really affects me when a kid is not happy. Because every child, no matter how crazy they can be and all the baggage that they have, they are just a child, and a child needs to be looked after, asked if they are alright. Once you build that rapport with that child they are with you for the rest of your life; they’ll do whatever you want them to do.

And on reflecting on herself, her professional teacher identity, her students, most favourite and least favourite teachers, Drew was struck by how reflective she was:

Oh, you know I have never thought about that but having described...having talked about them...until you’ve just asked me those questions but it kind of does seem like that’s the way I try approach my teaching...God, it’s really, really strange. I didn’t realise they had such an impact on me until you just asked me that question cos I’ve never even thought about it like that.

Drew likened herself to the teacher in *Dangerous Minds* who was 'caring' and 'gave the students a chance'. She also described her teaching techniques similar to Mr Keating where she had students around her all the time. She described how *Bad Teacher* was nothing like her, although students should see teachers' personalities. It was when she described the teacher images in the reality documentaries that it became even more apparent that Drew's believed in the importance of teacher-student relationships. Drew loved watch *Educating Yorkshire*, especially the story about the boy with speech impediment. The way the Deputy Head worked with him 'showed how much we do as teachers'. The reality programmes, according to Drew, made her feel hopeful that good teachers are out there, like the example of the *Educating...* shows:

He taught English and he had a good way with the kids. There was a guy with him all the time and he was really involved with the kids. It's those teachers who are martyrs as well, doesn't make you the best teacher, and then go on about it. His heart was in the right place but then he says I can't go to the hospital cos I've been here the whole day.

Drew commented with emotion about the reality documentaries in relation to teacher-student relationships. She described a respect that should be two-way between both teachers and students in order for teachers to support students both academically and pastorally. She also brought into question how much of an act the teachers on the show may be presenting to the students and for the camera:

I can't stand them (RE and Science teacher in *Tough Young Teachers*). They are just annoying cos of the lack of respect they had for the kids in the classroom. They should respect me. I'm tired. It's your job. Their tone with the students was horrendous. Just talk to them like they're a human being. They're a child. Why can't you remember they're a child? Maybe they're still a child. That's why they act like that. You're acting. That's why something like this training programme bothers me that you can just go into a school and say I'm a teacher, and I'm here to teach. Where's the training? Where's the standardisation? OK you're getting observed but you need that armour to come in before

you can even start. You need to start understanding kids. I think a lot of work should be about the psychology of teaching children or you're not gonna manage the rest of it.

It was clear that Drew felt strongly about teacher-student relationships as an important part of professional teacher identities to the extent she believed it needed to be an integral part of teaching training before entering a classroom.

#### Conclusion:

Drew's narratives clearly presented a professional teacher identity where **teacher-student relationships** are important. This was evident when Drew used her **personal memories** (Ben-Peretz, 1995; Goodson, 2010) of being a student and training to teach, and teacher images from fictional media (film and TV), including reality documentaries as a **vehicle** to **reflect** back to her own professional teacher identity (Weber and Mitchell, 1995; Fisher et al., 2008). She used the reality documentaries in particular to highlight ways she not only is as a teacher but also the way she would like to be, especially when discussing the *Educating...* series. As teacher-student relationships surfaced many times in Drew's narrative, there was also a great deal of **emotion** (Hargreaves, 1998) expressed throughout her narratives (anger, frustration, empathy and happiness as examples). Drew reflects confidently and her narratives did develop over the course of this research demonstrating **narrative learning** (Goodson et al., 2010) and **reflection** (Giddens, 1991).

#### Hilary

Hilary was an English and media teacher with 4 years teaching experience. Having not interviewed Hilary before, I discussed with her most and least favourite teachers first and her professional teacher identity. Hilary described her favourite teachers as ones who 'care about your progress', had a 'good nature and was good company around the class'. This demonstrated positive teacher-student relationships (RQ3). The teachers she could remember positively were 'mid-way through their career and mid 30s', a similar age to her own, and possibly because she could relate to these teachers back to her own professional teacher identity. Her least favourite teachers were typically 'very traditional,

strict, overbearing, and unreasonable. She also described them as demanding and particular about the way students behaved in their lessons.

Reflecting back Hilary discussed how she became a teacher. Unlike the majority of teachers in my research, Hilary had a long-standing career which was not education-based prior to starting her career in teaching:

Teaching wasn't my first choice but it was on my list of things to do. I wanted to work in the media, so I worked in TV and production for a year or two but teaching kept calling me. My mum, my grandfather were encouraging. Mum always wanted to be a teacher, but you had to pay to become study further but my grandfather could only afford her older sister. My closest friends could see me doing this. Some people think I'm mad in a secondary school, but I don't regret it, but it's not for life but I dunno what it is yet.

Teachers' interpretations of teacher images in media (RQ1) and the use of teacher images as a vehicle to express their professional teacher identity (RQ2).

#### **Television and Film:**

When choosing images of fictional teachers in media, Hilary firstly picked out Mr Miyagi, and Mr Keating as teachers she recognised. She also mentioned Erin Grunwell in *Freedom Writers* which she watched just as she started teaching. She found the film very inspiring as the character was a teacher who fought against the system and would do anything for her students:

*Freedom Writers*, that film was very inspirational. I watched that before I became a teacher just because of her passion and would do what she could for her students. They didn't have the money so she would go out of her own way to pay for it. Even though they were disengaged, she made them grow. It's that determination. I watched that just before my training, fighting against the system, believing in the students and did what she could to support them.

Passion was mentioned which seemed to be an important trait of Hilary's professional teacher identity as well as being determined and supportive. She returned back to Mr Miyagi and was also able to liken him to a university lecturer and secondary school teachers who were more like mentors, a description of a professional teacher identity. She described a 'mentoring teacher' as one who was not just there for the academic work, but for teaching life lessons also. She therefore aspired to be like *Mr Miyagi* as he was 'extremely calm and inspiring', and made his students do things which they questioned, but eventually it all came together and makes sense. Thus, passion, determination, supportive and mentoring traits were associated with Hilary's impression of what a professional teacher identity should be, and could reflect on her own identity as a teacher also. She later uses the term 'role-model' as part of her professional teacher identity.

She further likened herself to Michelle Pfeiffer's character, Louanne Johnson in *Dangerous Minds*. She was especially drawn to the image where this character has crossed out the word 'die', and replaced it with 'choose' which Hilary thought was particularly thought-provoking:

I'm probably a bit like her (*Dangerous Minds*). I like the fact that she has we want to die crossed out and has written choose. She is pointing out we don't have to stay the way we are, that we have choices, and talking about cause and effect. You can talk to students to change their views of the world cos they can be quite narrow-minded, or not aware so it's just trying to make that difference to realise it's not the end of the world; it's gonna make them grow. I'd love to be like Mr Miyagi, very calm no matter what he is faced with. He has the look. He doesn't argue back, he just walks away. He knows they've gone too far. I like how he teaches too. It's not dictating it's questioning, making the students think for themselves.

Passion was described once again using the example of Mr Keating. She liked her students to see that passion in her reading, or when they role play a chapter:

I think, like with Mr Keating, he's very passionate about the text he's reading. You can get really passionate about it and when students see that, they get passionate about it too, maybe doing some role play with that to show they understand that.

However, Hilary questioned how realistic the representations of teachers in media were, also showing strong emotions towards particular television programmes. She used a specific example from *Waterloo Road* to illustrate the unrealistic nature of some drama programmes in a school setting:

I have, out of curiosity, watched *Waterloo*, but it's so unrealistic and over the top. One episode there was a new girl started at the school. She got wild, got into a car and drove off with the car. There was one with army training, but not realistic in a city school, like how they dealt with it. Their personal issues come into the classroom which is over the top.

She also pointed out *Bad Teacher* as an awful representation of teachers and teaching especially as she classes being a teacher as a role model:

Definitely not this one (*Bad Teacher*). It was such a negative representation of teachers. This was terrible. It was appalling, despicable, unless that's what they do in America. I have never come across that in my life. They shouldn't be in the job full stop. You're supposed to be a role model, and no way can you be a role model sticking your feet up on the desk and dressed like that, and being that blunt.

### **Reality Documentaries:**

Hilary used *Tough Young Teachers* as her first example of a reality documentary which had made an impression on her in relation to her pedagogy and practice such as engaging students with a variety of teaching techniques. She had not actually watched the programme but had seen some snippets from extended advertisements:

I keep getting drawn to these *Tough Young Teachers*, experimenting with different strategies getting students to engage with the subject you are teaching, using different

methods, even an outing to think about the topic itself, outside of the topic, and thinking for themselves and how they can improve their work.

She stated that she had yet to see a film or documentary that showed the conveyor belt of classes teachers see on a daily basis, and how teachers have to adapt many times throughout a single day. She concluded that there may not be much consistency in teacher images in media. She believed that the reality documentaries were a step towards seeing the truth behind the school building. As mentioned, Hilary had not seen *Tough Young Teachers*, but had seen *Educating Yorkshire*. She liked that the documentaries showed an objective view as it took into account teacher and students' points of view. She felt the documentaries open up the viewers' mind on issues aside from teaching in the classroom that can often be out of a teacher's control. The findings from this part of Hilary's narratives lie with my third research question, which focused on the influence of teacher images in media on teacher-student relationships.

#### Teacher-student relationships (RQ3)

There were features of Hilary's narrative where she remarked that teaching was 'not only confined to the classroom' thus establishing that a professional teacher identity would need adapting in and out of the classroom. This became more apparent when she described examples she had seen in reality documentaries:

It's interesting to hear what they think about, what they care about, what they find frustrating, err, difficult. There are challenges with some students and, cos you can look at it objectively, and see what this student is saying about the teacher saying why they find it difficult, and then you see the teacher's point of view, and you can understand the teacher's point of view but you can understand it more this way where the student's coming from. The Science and RE teacher stood out. You could tell they genuinely care. He took him out to a farm, but it was the student's background that made him behave that way. You can understand the difficulty with some students and trying to deal with



that, something nothing to do with us. I liked her (the science teacher), because she was firm. She was sure what she wanted, but you also see her get upset and frustrated and then she was happy with them getting the grades. You could see she cared.

Even when describing herself in the first part of the interview, she discussed how she realised that teenagers 'need more manipulation', with her being more relaxed but firm together. She described herself as caring, especially if the students are willing to try. She did feel she had to be different with different groups of students due to the different dynamics of a group, and also mentioned occasions where she had been attacked by students who challenged her knowledge. This called for her professional teacher identity to be adaptable:

I can be quite firm. I don't think I've overly strict since the beginning. I have chilled out. I was brought up to be respectful, but then I relaxed and with teenagers you have to act a certain way. You have to gain their trust before you tell that what to do. You have to manipulate them in a way. I encourage them to share those ideas in the classroom. I care about their progress especially if the student is willing to put in that progress, but there is only so far you can try and try. The rules are all the same but the dynamics in different classes are different; it does change the way you relate to them, like some are chatty but lovely. They are open and wanna discuss things for a longer time. Some are quite arrogant and challenge you too much. I can get defensive and not reveal too much of myself. Others, they're quite laid back, like the lower ability girls. You have to relate to something in their lives. You have to adapt to the dynamics of the class can rule the way the lesson goes.

She was able to reflect back on similar situations with her own teachers from her personal memories. Her relationships with these teachers when she went to school also showed evidence of teacher-student relationships being an important aspect of teaching and learning for Hilary:

I eventually got along with them if I had them for many years and got use to their behaviours even if their teaching was very flat and copying off the board. After a while we got on especially if I was good in the subject

She added that as a student she needed to see the personal identity, not only the professional teacher identity:

You need to see teachers as a little bit human in order to relate to them. If you're just strict all the time, they'll just switch off. Some teachers will perform to a certain point especially if they ask personal questions, but it is nice getting to know them and having a laugh about certain things.

Although teacher-student relationships were important as part of her professional teacher identity, Hilary's narrative was critical of fictional teacher images. She commented that teaching in reality would not focus solely on a single class or individual student, but on several which was not depicted accurately in reality documentaries, and television programmes and films. Usually fictional teaching programmes and films focus on teacher-student relationships in a very concentrated manner in her opinion:

I felt at the time when I was younger that was quite true to how teachers are (points at the image of teachers from *Grange Hill*). Miss Honey...I don't know how realistic that is, taking a child, home. Would you want to take a student home? I think *Freedom Writers* was more influential because I was going on my training soon after, and it's how I want to be cos she's determined and doesn't give up and does her absolute best, but it was also unrealistic cos it also focused on one class. We don't have that benefit. I have still yet to see a film with a teacher dealing with different classes. Reality shows do but they focus on the tougher classes.

### Conclusion:

Hilary was able to reflect on her own professional teacher identity using media images as a **stimulus** for her narratives confidently (Weber and Mitchell, 1995; Fisher et al., 2008). Due to the nature of her teaching role, she became very analytical of hidden meanings behind specific scenes like when she discussed *Dangerous Minds*. This was interesting as I was witnessing a great deal of internal **reflection** and finally communicating this in her narrative when discussing her professional teacher identity. She was also clear in expressing that there were **multiple identities** which teachers needed to adopt as part of their **role** (Mead, 1934; Stryker, 1980) they **play** (Goffman, 1990; Gergen, 1991). She also discussed a difference between a **personal** 'human' identity (Deschamps and Devos, 1998; Doise, 1998) that students would need to see from a teacher in order to build **teacher-student relationships**. This highlighted the **fluidity** of identities (Buckingham, 2008) as well as an **adaptable** (Buckingham, 2008; Goodson et al., 2010) nature identity must have as expressed in her narrative.

### Ben

Ben was a teacher of History and Government and Politics. He had been teaching for 6 years in the school and also had the responsibility for Head of Government and Politics in the Sixth Form. He recently resigned (2014) but was still supply teaching in a variety of other schools. He was able to describe his own professional teacher identity and relate this back to teachers he knew from his own personal memories when he was a student:

I think I make the classroom quite relaxed, um purposeful...I like my lessons done to high standard. I do spend a lot of time planning and I do...I want them to come in and think, 'oh ok, that's a good lesson there'. My view is that I want them to be...a bit like perhaps...how I'm speaking about Mr Venton and Mr Lomas. I want to be seen in the same regard. I want them to say, when they do leave, 'oh Mr *Stiller*, he was a good

teacher....and when you came in, he taught a good lesson'. 'I enjoyed my lesson but I learnt a lot as well'. Whether I'm there or not yet, I dunno, but the students are the best to ask. Not every student's gonna enjoy my lessons... I dunno why (laughs)...yeah purposeful, enjoyable...yeah.

Teachers' interpretations of teacher images in media (RQ1) and the use of teacher images as a vehicle to express their professional teacher identity (RQ2).

### **Television and Film:**

Ben's interview was markedly shorter than the other teachers. He had recently resigned and there was a lack of positivity in the interview compared to his first interview. This could be due to coming close to his resignation. He initially struggled to pick out many fictional teacher images in TV and film, and he did not know all by name. He firstly mentioned Mr Feeney from *Boy Meets World* (ABC: 1993 – 2000) as a good teacher who cares about the students and can be cruel to be kind. He also draws similarities between Miss Honey and his primary school teachers:

I vaguely remember what he was like in *Boy Meets World*, like ones who taught me in the past, English probably. I can kind of, I dunno, what I remember about Mr Feeney, a good teacher at heart, cared about how his students did but could be strict to get the best out of you, if that makes sense. Trying to be cruel to be kind. I had a teacher when I was younger, who was very kind in my primary school, like Miss Honey. I can't remember her shouting. She was very nurturing. They're the two at the moment that stands out for me if that makes sense.

Throughout his narrative, Ben consistently asked if his responses made sense which often slowed down his narrative making it less fluent and more cautious, for example when he likened himself to Mr Feeney:

I can see elements of Mr Feeney in me. I am prepared to give 'em a kick up the back side, not be unpopular, cos I'm not here to be liked. I will try and push as best as I can especially

if there is someone not meeting their potential. They just need pointing in the right direction. I am easy going as a tutor, so I can be very much like Miss Honey in that sense.

I probably have two personalities with the tutor group cos you don't teach them you develop a different kind of relationship. You look out for their welfare.

From his narrative, he had high expectations of his students with the word 'push'. Duplicity in his teaching role was also clear, or rather 'different faces' or 'an act' he had to present as a teacher. His professional teacher identity therefore had to be different depending on the role (teacher vs. tutor). This was also linked to RQ3 (teacher-student relationships). From the image of *Dead Poets Society* he could see that the teacher in the film enjoyed his job, which he claimed he did when he is **in** the classroom indicating an unhappiness with his job out of the classroom. The places within a school could result in different, or altered, professional teacher identities.

Ben also linked his professional teacher identity to Mr Miyagi as a teacher who helps students effectively using one-on-one methods:

*Dead Poets Society*. He strikes me cos he loves his job. In the classroom I do enjoy that, very much getting them to think for themselves. His body language is trying to get them engaged and I like to do that. I have seen, but can't say I know all these characters. I am prepared to give up my time, like one-on-one. I dunno how to explain it. If they're willing to put in the time, I'm willing to put in the time also.

This section of Ben's narrative was also related to teacher-student relationships (RQ3).

### **Reality Documentaries:**

Ben had not watched *Educating Essex*, *Educating Yorkshire*, or *Tough Young Teachers*. As Ben spent all day in school, he did not feel he could continue watching more teaching-related media after work. He did, however, discuss the story of the boy with the stutter in *Educating Yorkshire* and how he found this story to be genuine and what he sees teaching is about. However, he wondered how much of what he viewed was genuine and how much was for the camera, plus to what degree it might be edited for entertaining non-teachers:

I have never seen these two. I am only going by their positions in the photos. I spend all day in the classroom so the last thing I want to do is watch more school. I have seen bits and one thing that was really touching was the Asian lad with the stutter, and the way they dealt with the kids was reasoning. He helped that lad get over his stutter. It was nice. It's what I would see teaching as. As a historian I'm thinking, how much is for the camera? How much is put on? How much is editing?

Compared to other teachers who described their professional teacher identity using specific terms such as 'mentor' and 'facilitator' for example, Ben used the term 'historian' to describe his professional teacher identity which did seem a little detached from the teaching aspect of his professional teacher identity. Later he did describe the role as a 'vocation'.

Ben believed that the snap shots the shows broadcasted may be too positive building up people's perceptions of teachers which could be false. Much like the fictional images of teachers in films, Ben commented on the impression the teachers put across by their body language, for example he did not like the body language of the teachers in *Tough Young Teachers* from what he had seen in advertisements of the reality documentary and the images I presented him with:

The way they are positioned and their body language. They're all look quite cocky (*Tough Young Teachers*), propelled into schools to try to make a difference. I would watch it to check if I have made the wrong impression of them, but just from here they don't look...they look arrogant.

However, he would like to watch an episode more fully to ascertain how accurate his impression was. He also questioned the impression people must have on him on a first meeting showing he was conscious how his professional teacher identity was conveyed. He did not like how the public were able to judge teachers based on the reality documentaries, and he did not like how teachers were being 'marketed':

I don't think the vast majority are very realistic, especially in half an hour to an hour. You can't capture it all. Not every day is the same. You can't just get a snapshot. I have come

across people that have traits like teachers here, but the role of how they are shown is not realistic. It's not all nicey nicey. It can cloud people's judgements. It can build people's judgement as to what the perception of a teacher should be, including non-teachers. Every school is different so, these are for entertainment. They're not the focal point of the film. They are either softened or over the top. They're not realistic in terms of what teachers go through. In one sense it's good because you see what teachers go through, but it's only a snapshot.

Regardless of his negativity, Ben believed that as it was a reality TV age these types of shows were going to emerge, but for the teaching population they did not need to. Ben thought they may be interesting for non-teachers but they only focused on one teacher or one student for a prolonged period of time. He did not believe anything can truly capture teaching accurately enough unless an individual teaches in a school:

Would I ever take part in it one day? No, no way. It's a reality age so it's not wanted or needed. I don't think we needed to be seen in a reality format. It's just another thing to tick off. People's taste and demand for reality TV now.

However, the pressures of the role as a teacher emerged in his narrative:

Show me an OFSTED inspection, or massive demands, or about to have a lesson obs, or people are under stress and really don't have time. It's trying to justify and prove that teachers are doing these stuff. We're not being represented well. I hate the way we are marketed. There's traits within the reality docs I like. I like the personalities (pointing to the images) they're kind, he goes out of his way to help, she's respectful, prepared to be unpopular, but the purpose is to entertain so it softens what a teacher really is.

### Teacher-student relationships (RQ3)

As outlined in Ben's narrative he believed that as a tutor he is more approachable. He defined a teacher identity and a tutor identity. He described how you need at least two personalities as you develop different types of relationships with the students:

I probably have two personalities with the tutor group cos you don't teach them you develop a different kind of relationship.

He emphasised the importance of each school being unique and different from each other, so even if a reality is portrayed, it could only be a reality for that school. Teachers in that one school would share the ethos of that particular school, so it was likely that teachers watching teachers in reality documentaries would still be critical of how they were being portrayed. However, Ben did think that reality documentaries portrayed relationships very well. He, like many of the other teachers, chose the example of the student with the stutter in *Educating Yorkshire* especially when he says:

I have seen bits and one thing that was really touching was the Asian lad with the stutter, and the way they dealt with the kids was reasoning. He helped that lad get over his stutter. It was nice. It's what I would see teaching as.

### Conclusion:

Ben was a good example of **social conditions** altering one's narrative style (Giddens, 1991; Maclure, 1993; Goodson et al., 2010; Goodson, 2013), for instance, being an extremely positive narrator of his professional teacher identity, followed by subsequent interviews where he became progressively negative in his comments. This coincided with his resignation from working in a permanent position to supply teaching. He began to show a reduction in engaging and **reflecting** (Giddens, 1991; Goodson et al., 2010) fully with his professional teacher identity. Towards the end of the research, his narratives would relate to the teacher images but less so reflecting back to himself. This could be due to personal changes occurring with his professional teacher identity, and not enough time available to reflect and **adapt** (Buckingham, 2008; Goodson et al., 2010) to these changes. Hence his **narrative intensity**



weakened (Goodson et al., 2010). Much **emotion** was apparent (anger and resentment) in his narratives as the research progressed (Hargreaves, 1998; Day and Gu, 2009; McIntyre, 2010). However, Ben was still able to use the teacher-student relationships in **media as a vehicle** to describe that particular aspect linked to his professional teacher identity.

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## 6. Findings and Discussion: The Focus Groups

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Prior to conducting my final focus group with my sample of teachers, I decided to gather together my findings from the main interviews and pilot these findings as questions/discussion points with the NQTs in the school. I was the NQT coordinator at the time so organising a meeting with the group was not challenging, but it also gave me an insight into what these findings might mean to a novice teacher compared to the teachers in my sample who, by the end of my research, had a minimum of 2 years of experience to 15 years of experience. These NQTs had 6 months of experience in comparison, not including their training year.

### Findings from the NQT Focus Group

Although only a term into their NQT year, the NQTs had much to say about the role popular media had to play in influencing teachers. They particularly discussed TV shows that had been broadcast during their PGCE year such as *Tough Young Teachers*, but also *Waterloo Road* and the *Educating* series. Their responses were very similar to the teachers I have been interviewing in the past 4 years while also bringing up new points that I had not considered previously, therefore adding to some of my original findings from the individual teacher interviews. As with my main sample of teachers, I have separated out the findings from this interview using my three research questions. I have also underlined any findings which overlap with the findings of my main sample of teachers so common threads can be established.

### Teachers' interpretations of teacher images in media (RQ1) and the use of teacher images as a vehicle to express their professional teacher identity (RQ2).

As the NQTs had not participated in the previous interviews, I showed them a couple clips of teachers in popular media to assist their reflection on the teacher images from media. Some had watched *Breaking Bad* as a form of entertainment but had not noticed Mr White as a teacher figure, and on

watching the clip set away from the entirety of the episode, NQT 1 and 2 were particularly struck by how passionate Mr White is about his subject. This particular point was brought up by the Science and Geography teachers in my main sample of teachers, so we discussed this as my first finding: *When watching teachers in popular media, teachers will automatically reflect on their own professional identity*. NQT 1 agreed with this. He also added an example of where this may occur outside of being a teacher as he plays football in his spare time. He explained that when he watches a football game, he will watch it for technique and what he could use in his practice. He agreed that teachers may not watch popular media and consciously try to pick out techniques they can use in the classroom, but they might watch it and think to themselves, 'I would never do that!'

NQT 2 was particularly passionate about watching teachers in popular media in the last year and commenting on methods she would or would not use. She found she was doing this more with reality documentaries. NQT 2 also mentioned that TV programmes do not show the mundane about teaching, a finding from the majority of the main sample of teachers in my research, nor does media depict the positive elements of teaching until the end of a series. She questioned how the positive aspects of being a teacher can reach the general public if most of what programme makers televise are the troubles and obstacles throughout the majority of the programme. This particular NQT was using examples from reality documentaries. She questioned whether this would turn potential teachers off the teaching profession. This highlights obstacles that are currently present in recruiting new teachers and also teacher retention, and possibly media is not assisting in this.

NQT 3 added that, during her PGCE, it was more mechanical to reflect on what one saw or experienced linking back to herself as a teacher, but now it is more engrained in her practice and always involves constant reflection even when you are not intending to do so; watching a television programme or film with a teacher as a character may trigger moments of reflection back to their own professional teacher identity. NQT 2 was definitely more conscious of this in her narrative, and admitted she is

aware of when she reflects on her teaching, questioning whether she can link something she is doing, watching, involved in, back into the classroom.

We moved onto discussing whether teachers today are influenced by elite or traditional educators, therefore these images are not as strong and resilient as described by Harry Judge (1995). Judge described dominant images of teachers as powerful in the public imagination and now placed in a pedagogical museum. This was the most enlightening part of the session as all the NQTs were sure that traditional teaching methods do not fit into the type of teachers we have now. They all agreed there has been a change of culture in terms of methods teachers are expected to use, and the students we teach now. They mentioned the 'stand at the front of the classroom' teacher is not how we should teach now. NQT 2, however, gave a lovely example of a student who has just joined her class from China. NQT 2 teaches a syllabus in maths involving students justifying their own method of working out a problem (Maths Mastery). It involves a lot of independent learning and discovery. However, this particular student found it very difficult to adjust, because she is used to the traditional teaching methods as described by Harry Judge (1995). NQT 3 also gave an example of when she was teaching English in Vietnam as an after-school lesson. She found the students struggled with independent learning and traditional methods was all they wanted. However, after a few sessions, they enjoyed the sessions and took more ownership of their learning. The summary of this part of the session was that teaching in the UK has had a shift in culture so much so that Judge's idea of the elite, traditional teachers staying in our pedagogical museum may be very outdated. However, this may not be the case in different countries and cultures, and so may still be very relevant. I did ask the group about private/independent schooling in the UK just to test this idea they had, but as some of them or their siblings had been educated in that sector, they said teaching had changed and it would be teachers who had been in the profession for a long period of time who may still teach more traditionally, and also remember the elite images of teachers. Thus, are these images outdated? Who are the educators who are impacting on teachers? From the discussion just with this group of NQTs, it seems reality documentaries have impacted on them. Again discussed was how reflective teachers have to be now

compared to before; teachers are aware that traditional methods have a place, but cannot always be used for every class and every type of student.

**Emotions** towards media images of teachers became apparent throughout the focus group interview. The NQTs did believe that popular media could be used to inspire people, but they struggled to see how this could be achieved. There was a lot of frustration at how the media currently portrays teachers in newspapers, in particular NQT 1, who concluded that if the media have painted teachers as not competent at their job, it would take the media to fix this negative image. However, the NQTs battled with the idea that this could be impossible as viewers who are not teachers will not watch popular media and think this is what teachers are like, but rather what teachers should be like. They agreed it was a vicious cycle that may need a culture change for teachers to be viewed in a positive light. However, NQT 4 did think that *Tough Young Teachers* and the *Educating* programmes have shown a positive reality of what teaching is like, including the difficulties teachers face. She believes that this is start to shaping a new culture in the UK. They mentioned the Head teacher in *Educating Yorkshire* as an inspiring example, a teacher many of my sample of teachers discussed. The frustration about *Waterloo Road* from the NQTs was not as apparent compared to the teachers in my research.

NQT 2 added that the public would not want to watch any type of popular media if tragedies were not depicted, as the programme would not be entertaining. Frustration from NQT 2 emerged with how imbalanced the image of teaching is compared to the reality of teaching, but she can see that no one will watch the programmes otherwise. The difficulties some of the teachers face as shown in popular media could put people off teaching, according to NQT 2, but could prevent people going into profession with false hopes. NQT 4 thought viewers need to persevere, because if they did watch until the end of *Tough Young Teachers* they would see that teaching can make a difference. She gave the example of the teachers meeting David Cameron. NQT 4 said she felt quite emotional about the journey the teachers had, and this did affect her views of teaching as she made the transition from PGCE to NQT.

NQT 1 described a disparity between the training he received in university in terms of lectures and seminars, and the experience he received in school. They all agreed that the in-school experience is the most beneficial and it is likely that the experience they will receive this year will add to this. NQT 3 also discussed she had to try hard not to fall asleep during her university lectures and seminars because it was the 'putting it into practice' where she learned the most. NQT 3 did, however, say that the sessions she most remembered were ones where they showed them teachers teaching on screen, some of which were from popular media, but most were recordings of actual teachers in the classroom. This led me to question whether there is a place for popular media in teacher training. They all believed there was a place for it, as it prompts teachers to reflect. NQT 2 added that it is like doing an observation but without having to give the feedback to the actual teacher while instead reflecting back on yourself, thinking how you would do it. Most believed that the theory is good but it has to be seen in practice, and in the early stages of teaching, teachers in the media are the only exposure they had apart from teachers they encountered on practice, and in the early stages of the PGCE this exposure was not very frequent.

#### Teacher-student relationships (RQ3)

NQT 1, 2 and 3 found that aspect of reality documentaries frustrating because, in their opinion they did not show the full reality. NQT 4 added to this, and described the example of one teacher in *Tough Young Teachers* having the opportunity to mend a relationship with a student by taking him, along with some of the class, on a trip within a very short space of time. NQT 4's own friends have questioned if teachers can organise trips within such a short time-frame if relationships with students are not going well. NQT 4 believed the actual reality of planning and meeting with senior members about issues of safeguarding was not highlighted by the programme makers, depicting teaching outside of the classroom as rather ad hoc. Regardless of the inaccurate portrayal of trip planning, NQT 4 stated there is more emphasis on the relationships teachers with students in popular media, rather than their practice in the classroom. Pedagogy may be there, but you would need to be a teacher in order to notice this as it is subtly conveyed.

NQT 2 believed that the classroom interactions depicted on television, in particular reality documentaries, were very accurate, especially the way that students can take over lessons. She said it may not be completely true for this specific school, but they have all known teachers, or had experiences during their PGCE year of classrooms that were like *Waterloo Road*. Maybe some of the frustrations towards *Waterloo Road* from my original sample of teachers could be due to the culture at this school which they are accustomed to, and so would not entertain such behaviours portrayed on *Waterloo Road*. Compared to my main sample of teachers, I noticed that the majority of the NQTs did not discuss their interactions outside of the classroom with other members of staff or students. It is a possibility, as in the early stages of their teaching career that they are not attuned to this just yet. Walt, one of the youngest and less-experienced teachers in my main teacher sample did not discuss these out-of-the-classroom interactions as much as the more experienced teachers so this may reflect the stage of their teaching they are situated in which could be more focused on what is occurring in the classroom more than out of the classroom.

The NQTs were then prompted to speak about teacher-student relationships in more detail based on the idea that *TV programmes and films with teachers depict the relationships between teachers and students more strongly than pedagogy and practice*. Every NQT agreed with this statement, specifying that one had to concentrate to notice pedagogy and practice in comparison. They all believed that pedagogy would not be the intention of the programme makers. However, NQT 4 does believe that the government are trying to get more people into teaching, and that would explain why there has been an increase in TV programmes depicting teachers and their everyday lives in schools. NQT 4 and 1 also mentioned that the type of teacher in media is becoming younger and more relevant to the graduate rather than a focus on their retiring teacher image, portraying the starting points rather than the end points and demonstrating that 'you can make a difference now' (NQT 2).

### The Final Focus Group

As discussed in the Methodology chapter, the potential focus group was due to consist of 8 teachers. However, one teacher did not appear on the day as planned so there were 7 teachers in total for the final focus group interview. Both groups' conversations were recorded independent of each other. I tried to structure the focus group based on power relations but ended up being friendship groups as I believed that the conversation would flow better when teachers were amongst others I was aware they get along with. As a reminder, the focus group was as follows:

Teacher	Subject specialism including <i>Roles and responsibilities</i>
<b>Group 1</b>	
Jo	Science; <i>Head of Chemistry</i>
Walt	Science
Drew	Design and Technology; <i>Head of Technology</i>
<b>Group 2</b>	
Martin	ICT; <i>ICT lead</i>
Clarence	Design and Technology; <i>Second in Charge of Technology</i>
Matt	Geography; <i>Head of Year</i>
Erin	Design and Technology; <i>SLT in charge of Teaching and Learning</i>

**Table 2: Teachers in the Final Focus Group Discussion**

Below I have set out the narratives of the teachers in their smaller focus group in a descriptive format, and under relevant headings to highlight the themes that emerged during that part of their discussion, and the points raised are placed under my research questions.



Teachers' interpretations of teacher images in media (RQ1) and the use of teacher images as a vehicle to express their professional teacher identity (RQ2).

#### Focus group 1

##### **Reflecting on one's professional identity:**

Martin remembered discussing the first statement presented to the group from his individual interview: *When watching teachers in popular media, teachers will automatically reflect on their own professional identity.* Martin discussed his previous career which was not teaching. He says that now he is a teacher, he is more acutely 'aware of how teachers are portrayed, definitely'. He is emotive in expressing that he is 'personally offended when teachers are shown to be idiots'. Matt agreed with Martin's point as he tended to 'look at how they (teachers) were portrayed rather than what they are actually doing'. Matt questioned how true the editing is, and how programme makers were portraying teachers in terms of how they came across to the audience. Clarence also agreed and was critical of images of teachers and schools especially if what was portrayed was not part of a typical day in a school from his perspective. Martin added to this saying that when he was not a teacher he would not get so offended by the images. Matt stated that 'because it is so under scrutiny all the time and sometimes focus on the negatives.

##### **Changes to teachers' professional identities over time:**

Erin had been listening intently through Matt, Clarence and Martin's conversation and then finally contributed suggesting that the problem around teachers being incorrectly portrayed is that everyone has been to school so if you are a writer, editor or director, you would be influenced by teachers who taught you. She did not think those teachers were the same because the job (teaching) was not the same as it was. She described how 'the job is completely different from 15 years ago' and friends of hers would often ask her questions about teaching which were quite stereotypical from decades ago

not fitting the image of a teacher today. She drew on an example of a teacher from her schooling describing how angry teachers were and constantly striking for various reasons.

Martin stated that he would like to see more of the day-to-day practice in the classroom. Erin pointed out that the day-to-day in reality documentaries was probably not portrayed in classrooms due to the logistics of students' parents not agreeing to this, but also the boredom the viewer may experience watching the mundane if you are not a teacher. She suggested there would be a lack of understanding from the viewer in relation to this.

Erin then changed the focus onto teenagers, and Matt then described the differences between primary and secondary school teachers:

Erin: The public has lost sight of teenagers. They (the public) also view secondary school teachers differently from primary school teachers.

Matt: If you ask Joe Public to draw a primary school teacher, it'll be a smiley teacher, mumsy, with a flowery dress and curly hair, but a secondary school teacher would have leather elbow patches.

The group agreed with this stereotype that the public have of different types of teachers.

### **Adapting one's professional teacher identity:**

Clarence questioned whether, even a slight change in character when being recorded for reality documentaries could be unintentional but still occurs. Erin agreed with this point giving the example that even when teachers were observed, they alter their behaviour, conscious or not. Martin then pointed out that as a group of teachers in the same school there were other influencing factors that could affect their professional teacher identities:

Martin: We are massively influenced by our SLT because they decide on the training and new ideas to implement, more so than ideas we already have and that we see.

Matt: School sets the overall agenda.

Erin: It comes from the Head. Her vision is clear. But I'm not sure anyone of TV would make me want to be a teacher!

Erin pointed out the negative influence that media may have on encouraging teachers into the teaching profession. It was suggested that understanding the structure and ethos of a school can positively influence a teacher's professional identity, but understanding it via media can cause misconceptions of what is expected and thus discourage potential teachers because the image of teachers could be negatively juxtaposed from the reality of being a teacher.

### **Inspiring teacher images in media:**

Clarence asked the group, 'what about films?' moving away from reality documentaries. All mentioned *Dead Poets Society*. Erin was then reminded of a book she read, *Freedom Writers*, which was made into a film, originally from a book she read. She discussed this in her individual interviews, so the influence this had on her is very much a positive one as she is able to discuss this within a group and not only with myself, the research. She remembered the film because she regarded it as not fictitious, but 'encompassing truths' where a teacher encourages students to write a diary about confidence and aspirations. She said the film was not as good as much of the meaning was lost from the book highlighting the messages about teaching can be diluted through editing from one medium to another. Clarence discussed *Renaissance Man* and *Sister Act 2*, to which Martin commented on the issues with trying to achieve 'that type' of professional teacher identity. Clarence persisted with his positivity about these images regardless:

Clarence: The roles were different and not in a school setting, but they were essentially in a teacher role. They were inspirational educators.

Martin: We as teachers are more interested than non-teachers, but inspiring teachers like in *Dead Poets Society* takes time with all the admin, marking and assessment. We need to be practical about how to be inspiring. The resources aren't there.

Clarence: (continues to discuss *Sister Act*) Her enthusiasm, her smile, never shuts down.

That alone is inspiring. That can-do attitude.

Martin: *School of Rock*. That's another one, different, not classic.

Martin made an observation that dramas about teachers were more focused on inspirational teachers whereas the comedies were more about the lazy teachers. *Waterloo Road* came up in the conversation which the group all agreed they 'cannot stand'. As with the individual interviews, comments about *Waterloo Road* remained negative, and communicated with emotive language.

### **Emotions linked to professional teacher identities (fictional and non-fictional images):**

Clarence described his annoyance at the amount of daily bad press there is on radio stations such as Radio 1 about teachers. He said they were too negative, especially from presenters he knew have not done well in school. Matt added that they are not thinking about the teachers' reactions. Erin stated that anyone would be annoyed about seeing their profession on-screen or in any other form of media where it was exposed for others' opinions. Clarence defended this as he believed that the production team for *Casualty* do their research very well. However, I do question whether he had this opinion as he was not in the profession himself. It would be interesting to ask the opinion of a healthcare professional to see if they agreed with Clarence's statement. Clarence refocused on *Waterloo Road* worrying what students who watch it might think, and how influenced they may be. Erin remembered an example from *Educating Yorkshire* which annoyed her: cheeky boys are cute, and cheeky girls are foul. She described that both genders could be 'naughty' highlighting the imbalanced gender portrayal in TV shows. She suggested the same could apply for the teachers in the programme. She was frustrated that if programme makers could not get something so simple correct, then the portrayal of teachers must also be flawed.

### **Developing a Professional Teacher Identity (teacher training):**

When discussing the development of an identity as a teacher, Clarence opened up with, 'didn't learn anything!' in relation to his teacher training. Matt agreed, 'definitely right. I learnt more on the job'. Clarence mentioned that he was a practical learner, so he could see it on the screen but he needed to learn and experience things himself. Erin added:

You could do with a list of 20 good ideas. The NQTs and the PGCEs want to see specific teachers all the time, but you can't be that specific person; you need to see someone similar to yourself, or you'll want to hand in your notice. So seeing and observing is good, and media images could do the same, but it has to be the right example. But younger teachers are not aware of what teaching could be portrayed so may view teachers in media very differently.

### Focus Group 2

#### **Reality Documentaries:**

As with her individual interview, Jo mentioned she did not watch many of the shows they were discussing, but was aware of many of them through the newspapers and talking to others about the reality documentaries, in particular. This again highlighted that teachers can be exposed to media in other formats not only through an on-screen medium. Walt discussed feeling lucky to get a job as a teacher in this particular school. However, the reality documentary, *Tough Young Teachers* made him reflect on his practice as it was a similar school to where he trained. Drew questioned whether she could work somewhere like that. She reflected on the school she works in now, the school's SLT, the behaviour of the students and structure of the school. She believed that people would feel the same about watching this school in a reality documentary format. Jo stated that these popular images of teachers may not be accurate to which the others agreed. They also agreed that there is a question mark over why the teachers in *Tough Young Teachers* have become teachers and decided to televise themselves in the early stages of teaching where one is not established as a teacher, thus their

professional teacher identities would not be positively forged and they would not be confident as yet in the type of teacher they are although they may have an idea of the type of teacher they would like to be. Walt mentions the education the trainees had, and that the other teachers and students would not be able relate to them as they were private school educated. This was an interesting point made by Walt as he was private school educated himself. Some of the other teachers had made this comment in their individual interviews but more from the perspective that they were never taught or had taught in a private school. Walt may possibly be conveying the difficulties he has had establishing himself as a privately educated student now teaching in a comprehensive school environment. As much as this may come across as a criticism, there may possibly be some empathy from Walt for the trainees in *Tough Young Teachers*.

#### **Adapting one's professional teacher identity:**

Walt did have some criticisms of the way the trainees in *Tough Young Teachers* managed behaviour, and Drew added that they should have acted differently in order to be successful in controlling their classes. Drew suggested that when the public see reality documentaries, they assume this was a situation common for all teachers, thus ruining teachers' professional identities:

Walt: They are afraid of losing control and it's a defence mechanism to be tough.

Drew: They should be acting annoyed not actually annoyed but those teachers they were genuinely annoyed with the students which they (the students) can sense, because they were inexperienced and the students know this, and this ruins the reputations of actual teachers, and then in the news there's a bad reputation that teachers have but no one realises the true reasons why. The reputation is poor.

Drew had strong feelings about teacher images in media especially due to all the negative press in addition to fictional media images of teachers, yet people outside of teaching may not realise it is a 'great job and each day is different'. Jo, Walt and Drew discussed the dangers media had on students and that teachers must be aware of it as part of their professional teacher identity, pedagogy and

practice. According to the group, there continue to be threats to students which changes the type of teacher 'compared to teachers 10-20 years ago':

Walt: Kids are sexualised much younger, and obsessed about their weight. The teachers coming into the profession in the TV shows have to question how they would be influential in that way not just teaching their subject. There is more to a teacher than just what it was.

Jo: That's the thing, right? Everyone has an idea of teaching as they were taught by someone so they have assumptions, but there have been changes that teachers have had to adapt to and it's not as same as before. There is also a difference from one school to another not just over the passage of time. New teachers want to get on with their job but there needs to be a balance and an understanding of the issues that we have to be aware of from year to year.

Returning back to media images of teachers, Drew and Jo both regarded the teacher image as one on a conveyor belt, altering somewhat over time but not in the same way that teachers in real life have had to alter. They accepted that the stereotypical teacher images must be based on real life teachers but may not be realistic or current, nor did the teacher image in media depict the personal identity that may also interlace into one's professional teacher identity:

Drew: The stereotypes come from somewhere that's then in media, but it is a caricature.

Jo: Yeah, black print or a stock character. It will humanise a teacher if you show a small part of your real self as opposed to just being a teacher. It will be down to the teacher to decide how much to share.

Drew: Some are very defensive about this, but as teachers we can check on SIMS to see what allergies or issues they have, so it should be two-way.

Walt: We are a bit like councillors not just teachers.

Walt gave an example of student who broke down after his lesson which could not be ignored. Walt stated that there was a personal care teachers need to have with students as well as just being an

‘educator’. Much like the individual interviews, other terms were used instead of ‘teacher’ to describe the role which, in this example, was a ‘councillor’ and ‘educator’.

### **Intentions of television/film makers:**

Jo likened the portrayal of teachers’ professional identities in media to portrayals of lawyers. She suggested that media would not depict lawyers doing mundane lawyer-related activities like paperwork as it would not make good television. So even though many of the teachers would like the public to see the everyday activities of a teacher, when put into the context of another profession, the same enthusiasm would not be present. She concluded the following:

Jo: Teachers can be like a fish out of water in media. They want the maximum comfort they can get, so progress and easily getting along with students is not the most important thing to depict. Walt: They sensationalise what is happening in a school so people wonder how people could work somewhere like that. A whole episode of *Educating the East End* was about a girl’s love life which is not what school is all about. The students are trying to be so old and programme makers want to show that. It was absurd because it was an hour. She was screaming around the corridor calling her friend a traitor.

However, although Walt did question who would watch the hour programme, he admitted to watching the entire episode, thus the programme makers are managing to draw an audience, even if what is being portrayed is not to Walt’s liking. Drew could, however, see the reality in this particular example from the series:

Drew: It’s like a drama and it shows the different aspects of a school, but if you did go into the common room, that is going on, but maybe we’re not all aware of it. However, teachers want the teaching aspect to be shown more accurately; what it’s really like.

There was some discussion of films such as the teacher from *Ferris Beuller*, which Drew explained was a comedy but she had experienced standing at the front of the class with no one contributing to her questions. Jo remembered a French film similar to *Dangerous Minds* where the teacher taught in an



inner-city school and tried to make a difference. Drew compared herself to Michelle Pfeiffer as she had in her last individual interview. Jo used this example to explain the links film makers may be making between media and society:

Jo: Film makers have a temptation to use schools as a microcosm of social ills. They mean for the viewers to watch the film and then figure out, oh this can explain why fascism is an issue, or why suicide is an issue. They project all of that into a school.

Here Jo, was trying to make sense of the lack of realism with the teacher image not being the intention of the film-maker, but possibly another objective had been set when writing the storylines for a film such as impacts upon society. Jo discussed something similar in her individual interviews whereby teachers were used as a window to particular groups of individuals that otherwise would not be explored if not through the medium of education or work.

#### **Difference between American and British Teacher images:**

According to focus group 2, the lack of realism in teacher images were narrowed down to cultural differences depending on where a particular film was made.

Walt: It may not be the case, but there is a sense of freedom in American films which is not accurate in comparison to British versions, but it's more like a public school in films not TV.

They gave British examples like *St Trinians* and *Harry Potter* and *Carry On...* films as those based in public schools. Drew also mentioned that *Kidulthood* as more true to life, but more shocking in content thus not appealing to a wider audience. Drew remembered there were crews and gangs in schools she worked in and *Kidulthood* depicted that change in education accurately with the rise of knife crime at the time the film was released. However, she could not remember many teachers in the film, as it was more centred on the students' involvement. She suggested that, although not teacher-centred, the message from films like *Kidulthood* could influence professional teacher identities as they enabled teachers to reflect upon their teaching and relationships with those groups of students.

Drew: They have a secret life when they leave school. How as a school can you combat it? So it makes one reflect in a different way even without teacher images in the film.

London students seem older than other students, compared to my other experiences.

### Teacher-student relationships (RQ3)

#### Focus Group 1

##### **Intentions of film/programme makers:**

Clarence initially defended media images of teachers stating there are positives sides such as *Teachers* and *Educating Yorkshire*. He questioned, however, how planned some of the scenes may be such as the scenes with the boy with the stutter. Martin was cynical about this storyline, and thought that this particular story may have been 'too convenient'. The others also thought that the production team and teachers involved in the scenes may have just watched *The King's Speech* and adapted the ideas from the film into the TV show. Through discussion, Martin then changed his mind and agreed that the scene was probably genuine.

Linked to teacher-student relationships, Erin believed that now teachers are less angry than they were in the past, although maybe opinionated. She then compared this to the reality documentaries how the teachers portrayed were very nice, and show a great deal of care towards their students, but this was not always shown on drama shows. She believed that positive teacher-students relationships demonstrated well on reality documentaries. Erin claimed there was a gap in the portrayal of teacher images, with reality documentaries being more agreeable to her as opposed to television dramas and films which were more heavily scripted. Matt believed that media, especially the reality documentaries, do focus on relationships rather than pedagogy and practice. This idea was linked to the following statement given to the teachers: *TV programmes and films with teachers depict the relationships between teachers and students more strongly than pedagogy and practice*. There was indeed, evidence of the importance of relationships with pupils on teacher identity, motivation and resilience (Riley 2009; Morgan *et al.* 2010), and of the place of an 'ethic of care' in the teaching

profession (Vogt 2002; Malm 2004; Smith 2008; Ballet & Kelchtermans 2009). Martin wondered if teachers who were being filmed would come across more caring because they were conscious of the cameras in the room. Erin disagreed supporting that teachers stay behind for as long as it takes after school and do care that much, and reality documentaries have depicted that aspect of professional teacher identities more accurately than television dramas, and films.

## Focus Group 2

From the reality documentaries, Drew gave the example of the relationship between the science teacher in *Tough Young Teachers* and a student, where the teacher called the student a 'brethren'. Drew was disgusted she made the assumption that they were stereotypical black students. She reflected back on her own professional teacher identity, wondering if she had ever made similar assumptions. Jo said that teachers probably do make stereotypical comments but do not realise it. Jo also added that it is natural (part of one's personal identity) but teachers consciously try to not act on those urges. Thus, teachers are aware of the expected role of a teacher, preventing one from making comments that could bring one's professional teacher identity into question. Drew stated she was very much aware of this and looked out for the school's strict Assistant Head who might overhear a comment of this nature. Drew continued to pick out examples from *Educating Yorkshire* and focused on the teacher-student relationships and the presence those teachers had in and out of the classroom. She did not like the trainees on *Tough Young Teachers* due to their arrogance and hoped she was not like that as a teacher. The group agreed that students notice differences with a teacher if they were suddenly 'putting on a show' so 'you have to be yourself'. Jo added that the trainees enter the teaching profession 'thinking they can change the world and have an authority over the students'. They added that the new trainees do want the students to be educated but do not think of the background of the students:

Drew: There is invisible baggage with each student. You cannot have the old type of teacher because students will think that they are always being judged.

Walt shared his story about going to a Catholic school while being gay and knew at the time that he could not share how he felt with anyone at the school so teachers, in his opinion, were part of the problem. This emphasised the importance teacher-student relationships were when Walt was the student. Jo reflected back positively to the school they all teach in now, and described that there was a diversity across the teachers and students, so students always have someone to relate to.

### **Continuity in narratives in real life:**

Focus group 2 also discussed the storyline in *Educating Yorkshire* which focused on the student with the stutter, but also criticised it as being portrayed as a one-off occurrence which in reality can happen every day and over a long period of time. They summarised that these storylines are continuous and once reconciled, the story will continue:

Drew: It's those stories of the boy with the stutter was more realistic but we do it on a daily basis, and it may not be exposed to the world as a single instance which it was on the show, but teachers are encountering and making a difference to students on a daily basis, but on TV this came across like a one-off that does happen, but building up a student's confidence occurs more regular than the programme depicted. The music in the background also builds up the drama. We talk to students until 5pm helping them.

Jo: The gains teachers make are not as dramatic; it may happen a little at a time, but it happens. A lot of films are about escapism so the over-the-top character of a teacher helping a student has to be glorified or it seems like there's no hope in sight. They will take the students out of the classroom. If the character is too realistic, the hope is not there, for the viewer. They'll wonder why they are watching something if the resolution is not obvious.

Drew: But as a teacher, there is a need for a resolution or you think about it too much, and you don't move on as a teacher. It should be resolved in that day

Walt: Same as my personal life; needs to be resolved as soon as possible.

Jo disagreed with the others:

Life still carries on though, after the resolution. It's not like the movies where everything is resolved and then everyone goes home happily ever after. There is more continuity. We may want the quick resolution but that is rarely the case, plus the story continues and issues might arise again. Media does not show that. It's also not just one issue to be resolved.

Drew discussed the film *Freedom Writers* and how she could use the idea of writing a diary with her tutor group or other classes.

### **The changes in professional teacher identities over time:**

The statement about elite and traditional teachers from my initial findings used Mr Chips as an example. Unfortunately, the group did not know who Mr Chips was, but thought he might be a character from *Grange Hill*. They tried to think of other examples of traditional educators to assist this part of the discussion but struggled. Drew questioned whether these types of educators exist anymore based on 'the changing protocols of how you speak to a student'. Some trainee teachers, in her opinion, would like to be similar to the traditional educators, but she stated this would only be for a moment until they realised that those traditional methods would not work with the majority of students. Walt thought that the traditional teacher may still exist at Eton, back in his mum's day, or in small schools. Jo and Drew discussed *The Imitation Game* which had a flashback of being at school and the 'strange' child was not tolerated which the group regarded as sad as the school they work in is fully inclusive, so they could not imagine segregating a student purely due to their educational needs. Walt thought there was a more religious focus in education before the 1990s, hence why there was more tradition and control based on cultures surrounding a particular community. Jo wondered if the traditional educator meant a teacher who was not close to students the way teachers are now. Drew stated that 'those teachers' were not able to get close to students, and had to have a traditional type of barriers between themselves and the students, and the barrier was usually an attitude of students

having to respect the teacher or face negative consequences. Jo thought the barrier would simply be an authoritative barrier, but it was down to the teacher to establish what the barrier was, as opposed to just demanding respect. However, Drew described how PGCEs expected students to respect them immediately, and this was the wrong thing to do with students. She believed this expectation has stemmed from either their own education with overly traditional educators or the old-fashioned image of teachers in media. Walt thought that that students would respect a teacher eventually, but cultures and social background would affect how much respect you received from the students. They gave an example of the Chinese and Korean students in the school they all teach in having respect towards teachers, due to the influence of their parents' cultural background, and level of respect their parents had to have for their teachers when they were educated.

### **Developing one's professional teacher identity (teacher training)**

Jo was able to reflect back to her teacher training when discussing the development of her professional teacher identity and the role media could play in this. She remembered having a session where she was shown a video clip of teachers teaching from a particular film. However, she said that this was what her professor chose so was his idea of what a teacher could be like. She added that none of her professors studied in the UK or knew about teaching in the UK, so the same training would not always apply. The trainers were not teachers but delivered seminars, so their vision was different from what the vision for a teacher should or could really be. They were specialists in child psychology, but it was more theoretical:

Jo: It would be better to see examples. You don't always know a child, only researched the child.

Walt: They talked about types of assessment and structure, but you don't know what it all means. It would be useful to see someone teaching and point out the criteria from that.

Drew: I did not feel that I had any lectures before my training in the same depth, such as building relationships with students. This is the most important part of teaching. There is an assumption you can just maintain a relationship with students because we're human.

Jo: But the clips only covers part of the reality because the dramatic elements stand out too much. It would be better if a tutor visited a school with a trainee and observed together and discussed after. Teachers don't always know what you are looking for.

Drew agreed with this point and added that teachers learn on the job more than in their teacher training. Jo also had a misconception, possibly from her experiences as a student, or exposure to teachers who were more traditional that you could not get too close to students in terms of the relationship you had with them until she observed other teachers who were considered as better practitioners who would know each student's story in their class, which enabled them to plan effectively and control their classes successfully. Drew, however, did point out that there were gender issues with teacher-student relationships highlighting that male teachers could take longer or struggle to build the same teacher-student relationships which female teachers can, but which also depended on the type of student and their background.

Focus group 1 concluded that they did not think teachers have been represented well in media, and the images are not accurate ones. Sometimes the images can be positive in nature, but more often overly negative especially through the press (non-fictional). They agreed that the television dramas and films are a form of escapism, so people should not be thinking in too much depth as to how sympathetically a character is portrayed; the viewer should simply accept what they are viewing. In their opinion, if one is in the profession they are viewing it is difficult not to be critical of the image and reflect back to themselves in that profession. The fictional images ran alongside the non-fictional ones in terms of the emotions they surface in teachers, where this group believed they are portrayed as a profession very negatively especially in the news. However, the group did suggest that fictional media could be reflecting the messages non-fictional media was conveying, thus both could be

discouraging people from the teaching profession. The group also commented that more of a focus on the parents' roles could be included in all types of media rather than solely on teachers which is a frustration they all experience in the reality of teaching.

Focus group 2 concluded that teachers portrayed on TV can be an accurate depiction of how teachers are in reality. However, there is a variety of different types of teachers in reality which is reflected in media. The amount teachers care is also evident in media especially linked to teacher-student relationships. Drew in particular believed that teachers do reflect on how media images of teachers are 'different to the reality of being a teacher' and it is likely teachers would 'watch and reflect back to [their] own practice especially how different the school and teachers on TV are compared to yourself'.

Walt added that:

The reflection can be full of emotion, getting annoyed at what is depicted. Teachers may not end up agreeing with what is portrayed. Teachers are naturally controlling and organised, so when you see teachers in media, you will question and criticise.

Drew summarised that media 'can give the wrong impression of teaching to non-teachers, and it does take years of practice, and you are a very different teacher from when you start'. The group together suggested that teachers are 'always reflecting'.

#### Findings from the Whole Group Discussion

The difference in the balance of the discussion amongst both focus groups were very different, but as a whole group, overlapping points were made. Following the small-group discussions, the teachers were brought together for a whole-group discussion to summarise points on the findings and research questions.

The whole-group discussion began with the accuracy of teacher images in media. The manner in which teacher images in media are depicted compared to professional teacher identities in reality



was discussed at length including the change that these images have had over time. According to Jo, for example:

Media is inaccurate, tends to sensationalise. A good tool to draw out thoughts and reflections about yourself (as a teacher). You never end up agreeing with the images you see, but you can use the images as a good speculum through which I can analyse myself.

Within some of the narratives from individual interviews and comments from one of the smaller focus groups (focus group 2), there was also a distinction made between teacher images in media from American being very different from British images of teachers in media. Cultural differences were later discussed in this whole-group discussion, but in a slightly different way. Below, Jo and Drew refer back to teacher images in films that may be difficult to relate to as they are not British:

Jo: Most are not very British but there are sections in films that have a more British edge such as *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*.

Drew: The British ones are getting more dark and grim like *Kidulthood* (Drew)

A change in professional teacher identities is described, a finding in all the individual interviews and the both smaller focus groups. Drew and Erin drew comparisons between teachers they had when they were in school with teachers now:

Drew: That traditional, elite teacher just doesn't exist anymore because our role as a teacher has changes massively, and how we interact with students, and there is not this ideal of the teacher's up here and the student's below. We are here to work as a team.

Erin: The traditional teacher hasn't been completely dismissed in other countries, but more so in the UK. In Calcutta, they were so respectful to the point of fear. A lot of use of humiliation.

The point above made by Erin about differences across countries becomes a broader conversation with the rest of the group. There was an acceptance that professional teacher identities were different

elsewhere which Jo later added societal differences to which may also affect the type of professional teacher identity one may have:

Clarence: China, Sweden and Finland are leading in Education

Erin: They work to pass the test. Do we put value on that? The teachers there are like the traditional teachers. Those are not the right links for teachers here.

Walt: At home (Ireland) it's not like this (UK); teachers are much more distant.

Jo: Teacher images are not formed in a vacuum; they're formed by other factors such as cultural, economic...specific to that country, even radical tensions, GDP, so teaching and images of teachers generated would be different depending on those various factors.

Conversation moved onto reality documentaries particularly whether these teachers in this school would like to have a film crew to record their day-to-day activities. Although many of these teachers mentioned that the reality documentaries are edited and specific parts are chosen by the programme makers to entertain the viewer, it was challenging for the teachers to agree whether there would be anything worth watching from this school as they are a professional in that school witnessing the day to day. Some regarded the reality documentaries as more of a trend than a response to the lack of understanding a viewer may have about the teaching profession:

Erin: There's nothing great to film on a day to day. Kids are just doing their work and the odd encounter on one day all term but nothing controversial. Reality documentaries are a trend.

Jo: It's a new type of storytelling

Walt: I hate explaining it's not like that. It's just normal

Drew: Education-related reality documentaries are here because of Gove and the government changes

Emotions emerged once again, as they did in individual interviews and smaller focus group discussions. Frustration was evident, especially as Walt felt he needed to be ready to explain the reality to others, although he did not state whether this is to friends or students. From his earlier narratives, it may possibly be non-teachers in his circle of friends. Drew did think that more reality documentaries have emerged due to government changes, but who is to say that the government have not decided to respond to the public's misconceptions about the teaching profession via the means of what they consider a current trend?

Emotion also surfaced when commenting on teacher-student relationships. This was evident from the individual interviews and smaller focus group discussions:

Erin: they are all academies, not one local authority. We would say no. I got irritated with Beryl. She was annoying and unclear.

Drew: that science teacher was so aggressive calling a student 'brethren'!

Walt: lots of these teachers are from Oxford or Cambridge so the students find it hard to relate to them.

Erin: the ethos of Teach First makes me very angry!

Jo: condescending and patronising.

Erin: I am deeply offended. I wouldn't go into a doctor's surgery and start dishing out prescriptions. Who are you to come in and decide when to go off again? Arrogant shit! No training. The whole premise was deeply offensive. To be a good teacher you have to be reflective and in most jobs it may not be too necessary. You have to constantly be that professional and think about your actions, and not everyone can do that.

Drew: the PGCEs think they should get that respect immediately, but I question why. Maybe they are getting that impression from media or elsewhere that there is a hierarchy attached to teacher, but there is not, not as there was before.

In the whole-group discussion, it was interesting that the female teachers took the lead with the comments on RQ3 with the male teachers agreeing in the background.

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## 7. Findings and Discussion

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In the chapter 'Findings and Discussion: Teachers' Narratives', I presented stories from 13 teachers and reflected upon these stories linked to my three research questions, and highlighted themes that emerged linked to each teacher's narratives. These individuals allowed me to explore these research questions and were thus good examples based on the variety these teachers provided in their narratives. Without establishing rigid patterns or more precisely, cause, some correlations can be made although these cannot be generalised to similar groups of teachers in the same or other schools due to specific personal aspects that set each of these teachers apart from any other teacher. There were, however, complex variations or themes, which underpinned all these stories which I will discuss in this section of the chapter. These include professional teacher identity which can move across to a personal identity, emotional responses to teacher images in media and the depiction of teacher-student relationships in media, including other findings such as understanding the relevance of past images of teachers in media, intentions of media related to education and teacher images, and overlapping fictional images with non-fictional images of teacher in narratives. What emerges from the findings are four binaries which seemed to be at odds with one another, or complemented, or overlapped with each other during the teachers' narrations. In the individual interviews there was a cross-over with teachers narrating their professional teacher identity and lapsing into the personal memories, or personal identity.

### 1. The Research Questions

As identified in my introduction to my thesis, my research questions were as follows:

- 1. How do teachers interpret fictional representations of teachers in the media?**
- 2. How might teachers use media images of teachers as a vehicle in the construction of their professional teacher identities?**

I aimed to explore teachers' opinions about the way they are represented in media, specifically, on television and in film. I was aware that other forms of media may emerge during the individual teacher

interviews; these examples were not ignored but left incorporated into the narrative. However, the occurrence of this was rare. The teachers did indeed demonstrate emotions towards these images, some of negativity such as frustration and others of positivity such as fondness, with other types of emotions in between. While surfacing the emotions towards these images, the responses also began to indicate the type of identity these teachers had as they reflected back to their own professional teacher identity.

3. Finally, I wanted to explore the following: **How do media depictions of teachers' relationships with students affect the construction of teachers' professional identity, pedagogy and practice?**

I wanted to find out whether media can be used as a vehicle for teachers to discuss their relationships with students linked to their professional teacher identity. This was one of the more significant findings in my research as, without exception, teachers discussed media representations of teacher-student relationships while reflecting immediately to their own teacher-student relationships, including how they have changed and developed over time. Many of the teachers considered this aspect to be a very important part of their professional teacher identity as without an acute understanding of the importance of teacher-student relationships, it was considered that their teaching practice would be compromised.

## 2. The Main Findings

In my Theoretical Framework, I discussed various theoretical issues linked to this research. I argued that professional teacher identity is both a socially-constructed entity with elements of individual construction. In the case of this research, the aspect of society that I am focusing on is popular media (TV, film and reality documentaries). The construction of an identity can occur through the understanding of the world around oneself, and yet the self is the personal property of the individual who constructs their identity to an audience. In exploring this construction further, teachers' professional identities were constructed, negotiated and performed through their narratives.

Understanding narratives enables the individual to make sense of the social world as well as their own identity which would be constructed against a social backdrop. Conversational stories of personal experience are an important site for the social construction of self, and personal storytelling can be widely practised. Individuals are likely to move between these scripts, demonstrating a narrative's potential fluid nature, which in turn indicates the fluidity of one's identity. As outlined in previous chapters, narratives can therefore be 'socially patterned' but are always 'personally inscribed' (Goodson et al. 2010:126). It was also argued that narratives that do not blend both the personal and social dimensions are limited in their flexibility and adaptation to changes in circumstances. Thus, narrative learning can be considered as an ongoing process involving the construction and reconstruction of narratives which should involve teachers reflecting on their narratives across the course of this research. Reflecting on one's narrative would involve a retelling of the narrative to oneself. This was regarded as an interior conversation making the narrative personal, therefore understanding how their story may be accepted on a social level.

I will now discuss my main findings from the two interviews and the focus group discussions. There was a wealth of evidence of reflection on each teacher's professional identity including construction and reconstruction from the teachers' interviews to the focus group discussions. These findings are first outlined in the tables that follow and then expanded upon below. The findings that emerged were not necessarily consistent across all teachers.

**Below summarises the main findings:**

Teachers are affected by comments and media representations about their professional identities, and are able to use media images of teachers as a vehicle to explore their own professional teacher identities. The exploration of their professional teacher identities did not always involve describing the teacher they are, but often emphasised the teacher they were not. Teachers were able to express their professional teacher identity using media images of teachers as a stimulus, and reality

documentaries were more successful at generating narratives whether the teachers had or had not watched these programmes. For the teachers who had not watched reality documentaries about teachers, they had accessed them through the news, newspapers, or through conversations with other teachers. Thus, these teachers still had an opinion about the teacher images and were still able to link these images back to their own professional teacher identity. In comparison, if a teacher in the sample had not seen a particular film or television sitcom with teacher images, they were unable to comment further and relate these images back to their own professional teacher identity. Images that did not resonate as strongly as anticipated were image of past elite/traditional teachers, such as Mr Chips.

An important aspect of their professional teacher identities are the relationships they have with their students, and this can change over time, with a deeper or different understanding of their professional teacher identity and changes in social contexts. Thus, understanding teacher-student relations is a key part of teachers' practices, and is also the most rewarding aspect of teaching. It is the media portrayals of teacher-student relationships that have a greater influence on expressing their relationships with students than reflecting on their practice.

In terms of their practice, teachers perform a series of roles which are not insincere but seen as a necessity, and this can also be time and context dependent. This was portrayed in all the teachers' narratives.

**Finally, teachers construct and reconstruct their professional identities through the act of telling of stories, and constructing narratives. Story-telling is therefore a part of teachers' ongoing reflection and reflexivity.**

The section that follows includes explanations of each of these findings highlighting any patterns in the narratives that emerged. Some of the findings above merged into one another hence the following headings will be used: Narrating an Identity; Performing an Identity; Teacher Images from the Past; Representations of Teacher Images; Representations of Teacher Images in Media; Representations of Teacher Images – merging fictional images with non-fictional images; Emotional Responses; Teacher-



student relationships. Finally, I will outline any additional findings that emerged solely from the focus group discussion.

### Narrating an Identity

All the teachers in the sample (thirteen in total) reflected on their professional teacher identity whilst discussing teacher images in media. Teaching is considered a reflective profession, as mentioned by each of the teachers in the sample, so it seems it was inevitable that teachers would be involved in this level of reflection although some of the teachers did not fully realise they were reflecting on their professional teacher identities in the early stages of the research. The teachers' narratives often described what they were not in terms of their professional teacher identity linked to teacher images in media, rather than the teacher that they are. This was particularly true for teachers (eight in total) who were not versed in telling their narratives about themselves as teachers to others before (lack of rehearsal). Thus, where they had spoken to others about aspects of their professional teacher identity, the narrative flow was evident. It is also important to note here that teachers who had prior experience of other careers (non-teaching) were far more articulate about the role of being a teacher compared to their previous roles.

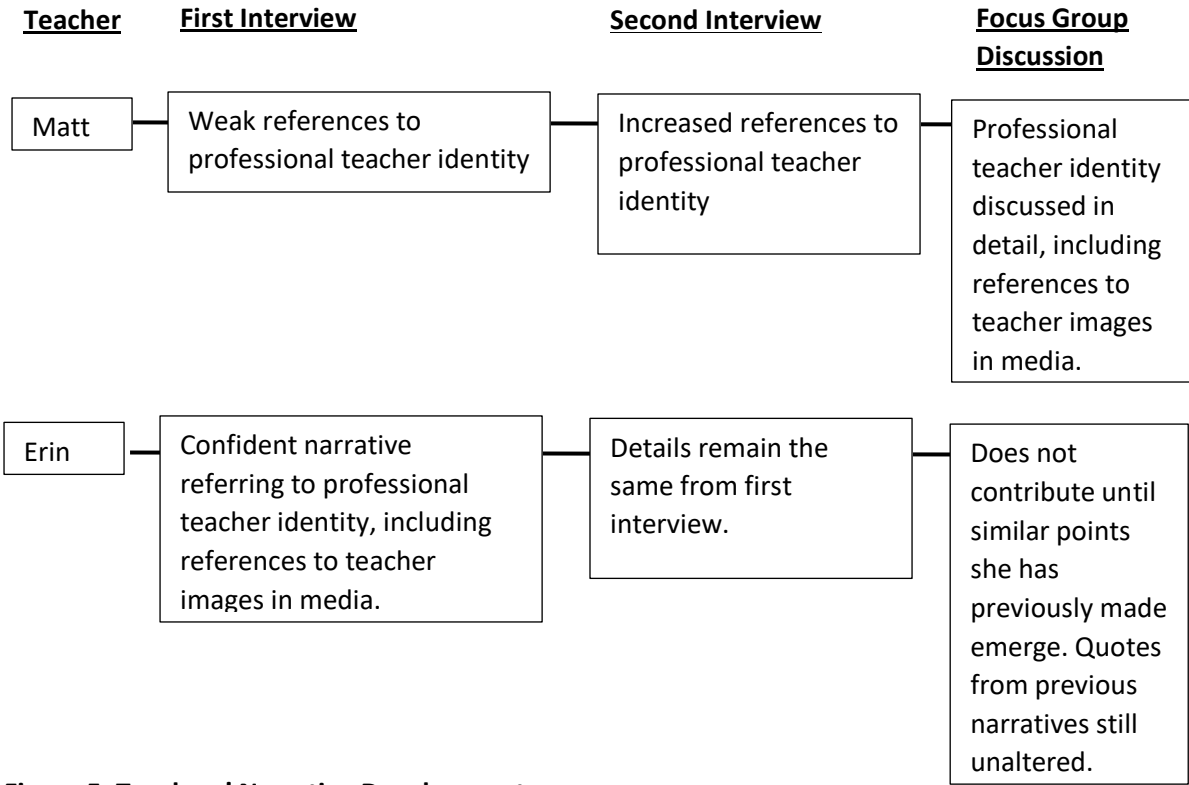
Matt, Walt, Anna, Joanne, Martin, Ben and Michelle are examples of this. It was these teachers, however, that demonstrated narrative developments with altered scripts from the first interview until the final focus group interview. Other teachers (Jo, Mark, Erin, Drew, Hilary and Clarence) were confident in their narratives having the richest content at the beginning of this research. However, points made from the first interview until the final interview, with some in the focus group, did not demonstrate any adaptations to their narrative script. Some quotes from their transcripts were almost identical throughout demonstrating a conviction to their personal reflection and their professional teacher identity, although lacking the reflective aspects the other teachers demonstrated. Goodson et al. (2010) described an adaptable nature that rich narratives would have over time. However, it was the teachers lacking in narrative quality at the start who developed their narratives more towards the end of the research. For example, Matt demonstrated low narrative

intensity much like John Peel in the Learning Lives Project. However, unlike John Peel, Matt adapted his narrative over time after interacting with others during the course of this research, so Matt was not stuck in a one-dimensional identity. I argue that this exhibits social construction of a professional teacher identity through interactions with the researcher, reflecting post-interview, and reflecting in a group with other teachers, with all stages exploring the influence of teacher images in media.

Personal and professional identities emerged often in conjunction through each of the teachers' narratives. Walt, as an example, had issues relating to his sexuality and being a teacher. This personal dimension was used as a reason he behaved in a more guarded manner in the classroom in order to guard his personal identity. This finding demonstrates the personal construction necessary for establishing an identity, in this case one's professional teacher identity; the personal self and memories are involved in the negotiation of one's role identity. Hence identity construction is not simply social, although media as the social construct has shown to influence the professional teacher identity of the teachers in this sample. Identity construction, I argue, is a reflexive process (Mead, 1934; Bruner, 1990; Giddens, 1991; Gergen, 1991; Illeris, 2008). Illeris and Gergen in particular discussed narratives being redesigned multiple times. However, my findings evidenced individuals not doing this, which over a two-year period I regard as significant. They are not demonstrating 'altered scripts' (Goodson et al., 2010) which involves remaining open with one's narratives.

I postulate that the journey of the narrative which did not exhibit alterations along the way is also demonstrating a lack of reflexivity or possibly a more stable core identity, although it may appear at the beginning that a particular teacher may present a very reflective and developed narrative. These individuals would have reflected extensively prior to this research being conducted, and due to their lack of reflection during the research, their narratives did not demonstrate the degree of development as initially expected.

Below illustrates this point using examples from the teachers in the sample:



**Figure 5: Teachers’ Narrative Development**

McAdams (2008) states that the more rehearsed and recounted a story is, the abler the individual is to deal with change. I argue the opposite, as with Erin, she had rehearsed and recounted her story, but there was no evidence of this story shifting if needed especially during the focus group discussion where teachers were challenging each other’s views. Her narrative, although detailed and rich, is a rigid one. So I argue that narratives can be rich, intense and detailed but this does not mean over time this specific type of narrator is necessarily adaptable to societal changes.

Only one of the teachers, Jo, mentioned their in-house university training linked to their professional teacher identity. The four other teachers who did discuss their training year, described their experience on their placements prior to achieving QTS (qualified teacher status). This was interesting as there is much research investigating the effectiveness of teacher training courses (The Carter Review, 2015), but this did not seem to be the case with this current research. In terms of media, 3 of

the 13 teachers thought media may influence future generations of trainee teachers, but not enough to regard this as a significant finding. Dalton and Linder (2008) mention that the purpose of film and TV with teacher images is not explicitly to educate, but, indirectly, they may be educative, but my findings do not indicate this as strongly. From the focus group discussion, TV programmes and films with teachers are not necessarily thinking about teachers as an audience, and therefore are not made to inform but entertain.

### Performing an Identity

During the pilot study, I asked teachers if there was an element of performance when in the role of a teacher. Many of the teachers were not able to respond to this in detail if asked about performing their identity directly. Some teachers interpreted this question as implying that teaching had a fake dimension. However, in the final set of interviews and focus group, the questions were broader asking each teacher about themselves in their teaching role. Ten out of the thirteen teachers used terms that indicated an act or performance was taking place in and out of the classroom especially in relation to their interactions with students compared to their interactions with other teachers. Each of these 10 teachers discussed 'being a certain way' with classes depending on their ability or age group. Comments such as, 'I can be myself with...' was also common. This demonstrated a different version of their professional teacher identity and hence multiple identities rather than a core or anchored identity. This therefore does not support Harter (1990), Schopflin (2001), Hitlin (2003) and Merchant (2006) who argue for a stable core identity, when in fact for an identity to be stable according to this research it cannot be rigid but needs to be adaptable. Nine out of the thirteen teachers considered their professional teacher identity to be labelled other than just 'teacher' but 'educator' or 'facilitator' for instance. Matt was the only teacher to mention specific spaces around the school as a reason why a teacher's professional teacher identity may be slightly altered at times. Although he was the only teacher who mentioned this explicitly, this may be the reason why the other teachers did discuss these 'other sides' to being a teacher, and is an area that could be researched further.

What emerged from the findings is a professional teacher identity that is pressured. Opinions of others including media can affect a professional teacher identity as a result (social construct). As this is linked to a profession which other individuals have been exposed to, there is a sense of everyone having an ideal of what this professional teacher identity should be. However, if what is around us (society or culture, for example) is shifting often, there is a pressure upon an individual to adapt to these changes. Teachers understand the nature of a professional teacher identity, but others may be misinformed and not able to shift their already-established images. Non-teachers may still use their image of teachers when they were taught as the template for what a professional teacher identity encompasses. Thus, teachers are having to embrace and understand their professional teacher identity in conjunction with identities that are imposed upon them. In the case of my research, this pressure is from media images of teachers.

#### Teacher Images from the Past

Teachers today are not influenced by elite, traditional images of teachers, therefore these images do not now seem as strong and resilient, twenty years on, as they were described by Judge in 1995 as being dominant images of teachers as powerful in the public imagination and now placed in a pedagogical museum. They may instead be found in the basement of these museums. These images do not now seem as strong and resilient now more than twenty years later. In an era of mass state education including new and different forms of training available for teachers, teachers are much less aware of their educational heritage from what would now be considered as traditional or elite educators, whether in reality or in as a teacher image in media. Rather, these images may be considered old-fashioned and not fitting for the type of students we are teaching now, as most of the teachers in my sample identified. Comments made were therefore generalised but not intellectually-fuelled pinpointing a precise understanding of the history of educators from twenty years back until now. This particular finding could highlight the specific culture of the school, not only the individual opinions of the teachers as this response was common amongst all the teachers in the sample.

Nevertheless, the awareness of changes that have occurred to teachers, teaching and schools are acknowledged amongst all the teachers in the sample with some commenting how non-teachers they know are shocked at the depiction of teachers and students in reality documentaries especially the challenges of teaching now compared to when they were at school.

### Representations of Teacher Images in Media

Teacher images in films and on TV were described in many ways with positive descriptions (for example: inspiring, impacting, passionate, humourous, real, heroic) and negative descriptions (caricatures, extreme, inaccurate, unrealistic, exaggerated, perpetuating, dramatic, theatrical. Rather than elaborating on their choices of descriptions of teacher images the teachers would make comments to reject or accept the teacher images, then swiftly moving onto the rest of their description of their own professional or personal identity in their narrative.

There was a genuine empathy exhibited by these teachers for fictional teachers if the character was struggling in some way. Various personal memories were used by the teachers in this research to describe their own professional teacher identity and teacher images in media. In addition, four teachers overlapped their personal memories into understanding the downfalls of the teacher images in media demonstrating a great empathy for these fictional teachers, and the influence of teacher images in media on their professional teacher identity.

Although not overly significant in terms of numbers of teachers in the sample commenting on this, I did find the following particularly interesting: three of the thirteen teachers believed the mundane/ everyday activities should be depicted on TV and film in order for media to be more realistic and reflect teaching in reality. However, they added that the format should be in the form of comedy in order to draw an audience in (I did question this, as the realism of the image may be lacking if in the comedy form although drawing in an audience). There are many devices used in media to portray the mundane, with British media being very different from American media. For instance, if theatrical, one could watch a character make a cup of tea for 7 minutes and this would be acceptable in this format.

The mundane could be portrayed but usually in between more significant scenes, usually using music in the background or as a filler between two more dramatic scenes with dialogue. The mundane and routine can be a resting point for the viewer to reflect on a scene that has just taken place. If the mundane were to go beyond the expected amount of time, then comedy is usually used as a device to maintain the viewer's involvement or the TV programme or film is unlikely to be enjoyed and watched. Examples of this include Mr Bean, Fawlty Towers and The Office. An audience is likely to accept the mundane if they are interested in the character being portrayed. This is where reality documentaries, sometimes referred to as 'ob-docs' (observational documentaries) can focus on people in one particular profession, or a single specific person allowing the everyday to transfer to the audience, and a likely reason why the teachers in this research mostly accepted this format for representing teachers. Although only 3 teachers mentioned this, this finding closely relates to reality documentaries, or what reality documentaries offer which traditional TV programmes and films do not. All the teachers did make comments about the reality documentaries whether they had watched them avidly or been exposed to them through conversations with others or read about them in newspapers. All thirteen teachers discussed reality documentaries positively with only Ben, Walt and Michelle negatively discussing their place in media. Nevertheless, whether the teachers had viewed them or not, all thirteen teachers were able to comment on reality documentaries of teachers and use these images to reflect back to their own professional teacher identity.

#### Representations of Teacher Images - *merging fictional images with non-fictional images*

Although not a large majority of teachers showed evidenced of this, more could be investigated into the influence of non-fictional media on professional teacher identities. Where opportunities arose, teachers did overlap comments about fictional and non-fictional representations of teachers. Comments included teachers receiving bad press on non-fictional media (news and in the papers). The teachers also mentioned that non-fictional media has the greatest degree of misrepresentation of teachers. These comments on teacher images which are fictional seem to weave seamlessly with

comments about non-fictional teacher images and representations. This finding was particularly interesting as, although I attempted to redirect teachers from overlapping comments about fictional and non-fictional media, not one teacher in the sample was able to keep personal comments about these forms of media separate. This seems to imply that insisting on a rigid divide between these sets of comments is not necessarily achievable, as from the teachers' points of view, both the fictional and non-fictional media feed into one another. This creates a bridge between the realities of teaching also as is evident from the teachers' narratives as they share their own personal stories of their professional teacher identity. As discussed in my literature review, and also in my findings, the press did emerge through the narratives although my research focused on fictional media rather than non-fictional. One of the criticisms of this type of research, especially one conducted by Peter Cunningham on the 1950s, was that not everyone watched television or had a television. It is important to note here that the increase use of other forms of technology to view media (internet and social media) could also play a role in how teachers are exposed to fictional teacher images, so it can be difficult to measure how teachers are exposed to fictional teacher images. Furthermore, some teachers in the sample chose not to watch television when they returned home from work, especially reality documentaries about teaching, preferring to watch box set sitcoms, thus being less exposed to teacher images that may have been on TV at the time.

In addition to the findings above, the following examples of teacher images from films and television programmes were mentioned (see below). Next to each example is the number of teachers who used these examples in their narratives out of thirteen teachers in total.

<b>Examples of Teacher Images/ Films/ Television programmes in Media</b>	<b>Number of teachers in sample who used this example (total 13)</b>
Mr Keating from Dead Poets Society (film)	11
Waterloo Road (TV)	9
Mr White from Breaking Bad (TV)	9
Dangerous Minds (film)	8
Educating Yorkshire (reality documentary)	9
Tough Young Teachers (reality documentary)	8
Educating Essex (reality documentary)	7



Ms Honey from Matilda (film)	7
Will Shuester from Glee (TV)	7
Harry Potter (film)	7
Perez from The Wire (TV)	5
Bad Teacher (film)	5
Grange Hill (TV)	4
Teachers (TV)	4
Freedom Writers (film and book)	4
Mr Miyagi from Karate Kid (film)	3
Mr Feeney from Boy Meets World (TV)	2
History Boys (film)	2
Mrs Norbury from Mean Girls (film)	2
Adrian Broady (film)	1
Detachment (film)	1
Sister Mary Clarence from Sister Act (film)	1
Yoda from Star Wars (film)	1
Notes on a Scandal (film)	1
Charlie Brown (TV)	1
Vampire Diaries (TV)	1

**Table 3: Examples of Teacher Images in Media**

### Emotional Responses

Finally, emotional responses (defined in the Literature Review chapter) were expressed by ten out of the thirteen teachers when discussing media images of teacher. Out of these ten teachers, this was most common among those who by the end of the research had, or were about to, resign from their current job with two of these teachers deciding on a change of career away from teaching. This exposed their professional teacher identity as affecting their opinions of fictional teacher images although some of these teachers did not consider the majority of teacher images to be realistic, yet opinions were emotionally fuelled. In addition, there was a clear emotional, rather than rational, response to teachers in reality documentaries. Of the fictional drama on TV, Waterloo Road exposed the most emotional responses with the majority being angry responses with the image of teachers described often as a 'caricature' or 'exaggerated'.

From the focus group, the teachers discussed having to embrace and understand their professional teacher identity in conjunction with identities that are imposed upon them. In the case

of my research, this pressure is from media images of teachers. There is a tension between the two which results in emotions surfacing in the teachers' narratives whether this is linked to the accuracy of the media images or the lack of a rounded depiction of professional teacher identities. Some of the teachers in this research conveyed a struggle with identifying with themselves as a result of these tensions. However, the amount of time teaching seems to be identified by the majority of the experienced teachers as important in reaching a point of negotiation with one's professional teacher identity, and therefore an acceptance resulting in a clearer and more confident narrative. As identity is linked with an evolving process, personal memories and emotions accompany many of the teachers' narratives, but to a varying degree from one teacher to the next. It seemed through these narratives that when an identity was under attack, or perceived to be, it was natural to express this frustration and defend the identity. There is an option to then leave the profession, which affects teacher retention. Narratives that were highly emotive did coincide with the teachers who resigned during or after the two years this research was conducted. Furthermore, many of the teachers suggested media could put off potential teachers entering the teaching profession due to the inaccurate depiction of teachers, thus making them question the professional teacher identities which they may already have. Although it is difficult to fully appreciate why some teachers' narratives were more emotionally-driven than others, the emotional responses were more pronounced with teachers who shortly resigned or actively seeking to resign from their post during the course of this research. This therefore portrays a correlation in my research although not a causal link, although it may reflect increased levels of sensitivity or fragility at the time these interviews were conducted.

### Teacher-Student Relationships

The importance of Teacher-student relationships relating to professional teacher identities was probably the most significant finding whereby teachers would discuss their professional teacher identity as being influenced by the relationships they have with their students. It seemed through the research taking place that media affecting pedagogy and practice was not likely to be a significant

finding. However, through describing their relationships with their students, the impact on their pedagogy and practice emerged. There were varying degrees by which teacher-student relationships were discussed with greater frequency amongst teachers who were more experienced and had responsibilities. If we take Walt, for instance, he mentioned teacher-student relationships relating to his personal identity, but not in terms of his pedagogy and practice nor did he include examples of teacher-student relationships from media. He was the only teacher who did not have any responsibilities for the duration of this research. Jo followed with number of years teaching experience (4 years). She did mention teacher-student relationships but not as frequently as more experienced teachers in the sample, such as Erin, Drew, Michelle, Mark and Matt. When media examples of teachers were used in their narratives, many did use examples where there were interactions with students. With the reality documentaries, it was the example of the deputy head teacher and the student with the stutter in *Educating Yorkshire* that was commonly described (12 out of the 13 teachers). The significance of the relationships teachers have with students highlights the student-centred approach the UK education system focuses on, especially in comprehensive schools. Interestingly, results achieved for classes, salary or promotions were not mentioned as the rewards of their teaching careers. According to the programme recently broadcast on BBC2, *Are our Kids Tough Enough?* teaching now is child-centred. The programme compares the UK's child-centred approach to militant learning in China embracing more elite methods. Teacher-student relationships are highlighted in this programme as an important part of teaching in the UK. However, more research in this area is possibly needed in order to fully appreciate whether this is the case for all schools in the UK, as more traditional methods are likely to still be adopted in independent schools and some state schools. Thus, this comment supports the findings in my research as a state school.

In addition to the above findings, there was an accepted duality in the professional identity of teachers whereby the balance was constantly shifting between professional and personal, and demonstrating a 'human side' was a common thread amongst the majority of teachers in this research. Different types of identity therefore did not seem to be inseparable, but overlap and interact with one

another. This enabled strong teacher-student relationships which seemed to underpin many of the teachers' professional identities, and the reason each teacher 'acted' or 'had to adapt' themselves in and out of the classroom. The engagement the teachers had with others whereby they were presenting their professional teacher identity tended to be focused on teacher-teacher interactions or teacher-student interactions but not teacher-parent interactions. This was a significant finding as there are daily teacher-parent interactions but only one teacher mentioned interactions with parents but as a fleeting remark based on a pressure upon themselves in their daily role as a teacher. The lack of commentary made by the teachers about this type of interaction brings into question whether teachers are fully engaged with this type of relationship in media and how it is represented.

#### Further Findings from the Focus Group Discussion

Within the focus group setting, rather than the individual's professional teacher identity being discussed, there was more a sense of classifying professional teacher identities as a group identity, hence there was more use of 'we' rather than 'I' in the narratives:

The self is reflexive in that it can take itself as an object, and can categorise, classify, or name itself in particular ways in relation to other social categories or classifications.

(Stets and Burke, 2000:224)

The quote above by Stets and Burke relies on the individual accepting they belong to a particular group, which are teachers as professionals in the case of this research. Thus, the emotions exhibited were expressed as a group of teachers being under threat in some way through unsympathetic depictions of teachers in media. This is interesting as this exhibits professional solidarity rather than personal insecurity. This could be due to a stronger sense of self as a group showing similar professional teacher identity traits rather than at odds in a group with other types of professionals. Media therefore encompasses a teacher identity of its own either working against or alongside real

life professional teacher identities. Some of the teachers were thus able to describe the images of teachers in media as either positive or negative in respect to their level of realism.

Focus group 1 had a varied focus in terms of media so discussed teacher images in film, television and in reality documentaries. Focus group 2 focused more on reality documentaries with some mention of teacher images in films. When discussing research questions 1 and 2, focus group 1 discussed reflecting on professional teacher identities, changes in professional teacher identities over time, adapting one's professional teacher identity, emotions linked to the depiction of professional teacher identities (fictional and non-fictional), the development of one's professional teacher identity through training, and Inspiring teacher images in media. When discussing research question 3, focus group 1 discussed Intentions of programme/film makers, and teacher-student relationships, specifically focused on its depiction in media versus their own experiences.

In comparison, when discussing research questions 1 and 2, focus group 2 discussed adapting one's professional teacher identity: media vs. reality, emotions linked to the realism of teacher images in media, Intentions of programme/film makers and the difference between American and British teacher images in media. For research question 3, the same group discussed the differences between teacher images in media and teachers in reality, changes in professional teacher identities over time, the development of one's professional teacher identity through training and adapting one's professional teacher identity but this time linked to teacher-student relationships.

Based on the group dynamics, the different findings were focused upon differently. For instance, focus group 1 discussed reflecting on professional teacher identities, changes in professional teacher identities over time, adapting one's professional teacher identity, inspiring teacher images in media, emotions linked to the depiction of professional teacher identities (fictional and non-fictional) and the development of one's professional teacher identity through training, linking back to RQ1 and RQ2. They also discussed, although less so, intentions of programme/film makers and teacher-student relationships linked to RQ3. In contrast, focus group 2 had more of a balance with what they discussed

linking back to my research questions. Under RQ1 and RQ2, focus group 2 discussed adapting one's professional teacher identity, emotions linked to the realism of teacher images in media, intentions of programme/film makers and the difference between American and British teacher images in media. Linked to RQ3, focus group 2 discussed the differences between teacher images in media and teachers in reality, changes in professional teacher identities over time, the development of one's professional teacher identity through training, and adapting one's professional teacher identity through teacher-student relationships. In the focus group discussion, there was an interlinking of a professional identity (that of a teacher) and a group identity (solidarity as a group of teachers). Giddens (1991) discussed personal integration that narratives may alter when in a social context in order to gain acceptance in a group. Not one teacher in the group noticeably altered their opinions, although most did elaborate on their points previously discussed in their individual interviews. However, the teacher-student relationships were only discussed by the female teachers. Whether there was a gender-specific reason this occurred in the focus group compared to the individual interviews is unclear, and may need to be explored further.

### **Final Thoughts on the Research Findings**

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, there were overlapping binaries which either came into conflict with each other or complemented each other. It was difficult to ascertain where these binaries overlapped exactly as the degree of overlap would vary from each individual teacher to another. This raises the following questions: where does the personal identity meet with a professional identity? Where does the individual teacher's identity meet the teacher identity as part of a community/group? Where do the personal memories of teaching overlap with professional memories of teaching? These questions will be addressed in the chapter which follows, my Conclusion.

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## 8. Conclusions

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For my thesis I outlined the aims and rationale behind my research, which was **to explore how media influence teachers' professional identity**. To investigate this, I constructed three research questions relating to this overarching title. Prior to conducting my research, I read and discussed fields of work by other researchers which applied to my own fieldwork. These included theories on identity in general, professional teacher identities, the history of media, research documenting teachers in media, and narrative research. These areas of research were documented in my Literature and Theoretical Framework chapter. Within this particular chapter I outlined my theoretical framework linked to identity construction through narratives. I proposed that in my research identity is constructed as a combination of social construction and personal/individual construction, with the latter embedding reflexivity and agency. Following this chapter, I explained the research design I employed in my Methodology chapter, including how I proposed to analyse my findings on a teacher by teacher basis in my Findings and Discussion chapter. The Findings and Discussion were structured into three chapters first around the teachers' narratives, then the focus group discussion, and finally the explanations of emerging patterns in the data. [As expressed in the Chapter 4, The Methodology, the narrative frame extended to my own interpretation, reflection and presentation of the teacher narratives. The thesis was, therefore, my interpretation of the teachers' interpretations of their narratives relating to their professional teacher identities.](#)

In this final chapter, I will draw conclusions from my research based on my three research questions, particularly how I addressed each of the questions, and the key contributions of this research that may not have been established before in this field of study. I will assess my research in terms of its limitations, and finally propose how this research could be extended or provide avenues for future exploration.

### How the research questions were answered

The research questions were answered using pilot studies prior to the first and second phase of interviews with individual teachers. A focus group discussion was set up with five NQTs in the school prior to the final focus group discussion with seven chosen teachers from the first and second phase of individual interviews. Whilst carrying out this research, I found that the use of timelines aided teachers' narratives. Page (2013) used a narrative research method along with timelines for her research, similar to my own research. I found the free format much more helpful for the timelines I employed in my first wave of interviews as they demonstrated facets of the teachers' identities that were not always immediately evident in the oral part of their interviews. The freedom in drawing a timeline displayed teachers becoming freer in what they were saying; teachers seemed more at ease. Bignold and Su (2013) discuss the power struggle between researcher and participant as one where the researcher is the active person in the process with the position of guiding the interview through the questions they decide to pose to the participant. I, however, made a conscious effort to allow time and space for teachers to speak and reflect. The timeline activity also made the interview more guided by the teacher. During my pilot study, the interviews were far more structured, and responses were narrow at times. However, during my first wave of interviews following my pilot study, questions were more open allowing the teachers to guide the direction of the interview. As a result, the first wave of interviews from each teacher are all very unique with some overlap in themes but the content reflecting more on their identity. At times, teachers questioned me with my own interview questions which I did not shy away from. The openness I had to respond developed trust through the interview followed by teachers opening up more as the interview progressed. All the teachers were very keen to see their transcripts and also continue with the interview process.

### The key contributions of this research

This research has contributed several findings which are considered to be unique in this field of study. These were outlined in my Findings and Discussion chapter.



**To outline:**

Teachers are affected by comments and media representations about their professional identities, and are able to use media images of teachers as a vehicle to explore their own professional teacher identities. Reality documentaries were more successful at generating narratives whether the teachers had or had not watched these programmes. Images that did not resonate as strongly as anticipated were image of past elite/traditional teachers. The media portrayals of teacher-student relationships that have a greater influence on expressing their relationships with students than reflecting on their practice. The relationships teachers have with their students is an important aspect of professional teacher identities, and understanding teacher-student relations is essential in teachers' practices. There is evidence to suggest that teachers perform a series of roles as part of their professional teacher identity, thus a teacher identity is not one-dimensional but contains multiple versions of that identity. Story-telling is a part of teachers' ongoing reflection and reflexivity linked to the construction and reconstruction of their professional identities.

I will now explain how each of these key contributions under the relevant research questions.

**1. How do teachers interpret fictional representations of teachers in the media?**

The teachers demonstrated various **emotions** and feelings towards teacher images in media, rather than simply rational or intellectual responses to what they had seen in media. The responses also began to indicate the type of identity these teachers had as they reflected back to their own professional teacher identity, and personal memories of their own education as a student being educated and as a trainee teacher. Many of the teachers also used examples of the early stages of their teaching career comparing the teacher they consider themselves to be now and the teacher they were in the first couple of years of their teaching career. This indicated an awareness of changes in their professional teacher identity over time. Teachers were therefore demonstrating evidence of having reflected on their professional teacher identities now and in the past.

There seemed to be some relationship between teachers having emotional responses to media images of teachers and those who were soon to resign from their job at the school during the course of this research being conducted. Frequent emotional responses were expressed by teachers with greater levels of responsibility, and teachers who had been in the profession for longer periods of time, compared to those who had just started a role of responsibility or just started their teaching career. However, it is important to note that this relationship cannot be generalised to all teachers but is a feature of this particular group of teachers in this study. It is also important to note here that teachers who had prior experience of other careers (non-teaching) were far more articulate about the role of being a teacher compared to their previous roles. This could indicate an understanding of their professional identity in their previous role, hence why they demonstrated a more well-defined comparison between these roles was conveyed.

Although in a fictional format, teachers will justify issues with experiences in reality, possibly as there is an element of reality in the depiction of fictional teacher images. There was genuine **empathy for failing fictional teacher images** with some teachers justifying fictional teachers' downfalls with real issues and obstacles experienced by teachers in real life.

The **intentions of media** were also discussed by all the teachers in my sample. As will be already established in the literature, the teachers in my research noted that TV programmes and films with teachers are not necessarily thinking about teachers as an audience, and therefore are not made to inform but primarily to entertain. However, although the purpose of film and TV with teacher images may not be explicitly to educate, they may be indirectly educative. In a similar way to fictional TV and film, many of the teachers believed that the images of teachers in the reality documentaries were not always sympathetically portrayed, and may be edited somehow having heightened or exaggerated characteristics in order to appeal to a wider audience, not just teachers alone. Without exception, the teachers in my sample indicated that the mundane and everyday activities should be depicted in media whether in the fictional format or the semi-fictional format of reality

documentaries. It seemed that the mundane was something that the teachers felt was part of, not only their profession, but also their professional teacher identity.

## **2. How might teachers use media images of teachers as a vehicle in the construction of their professional teacher identities?**

For this particular research question, I aimed to explore the opinions that teachers in a single school had about teacher images in media. These images were from television and in film, and the teachers' opinions were focused on how accurately and sympathetically they thought teachers were represented in these forms of media, and how these affected their professional teacher identity. I was aware that other forms of media may emerge during the individual teacher interviews such as non-fictional media, for example in the news and newspapers, social media, books and radio broadcasts. If these other forms of media did emerge, these examples were still incorporated into the teachers' narratives in my Findings and Discussion and not ignored. Press comments about teachers, for instance, did emerge more commonly amongst each teacher in my research and, as part of their narratives, they were integrated into responses about teacher images in fictional media. Each teacher made **references to non-fictional media** whilst teachers were commenting on fictional images of teachers in media. Each teacher commented that non-fictional media have the greatest degree of misrepresentation of teachers in schools. Teachers believed they receive bad press on non-fictional media (news and in the papers) so TV and film could be an alternative medium demonstrating how hard teachers do work unless people did come into a school and witness first-hand what it is like to teach. The comments on teacher images which are fictional seem to weave seamlessly with comments about non-fictional teacher images and representations. Teachers are therefore affected or influenced by external comments and representations about their professional teacher identity.

Whilst watching teachers in popular media, teachers automatically reflected on their own professional identity although this may not necessarily have been a conscious action. I was surprised by the number of teachers who did but were unaware or claimed never to do so, yet their narratives

proved otherwise, for example in Matt's narrative. The teachers' narratives often stated what they were not especially if discussing a controversial teacher image in media. Teachers seem to be influenced by teacher images in media as expressed through their narratives although all but 2 teachers (Jo and Mark) claimed they were not directly affected by media images of teachers if asked outright during the interview. In contrast, some teachers showed evidence of rehearsed narratives as description of self was very fluid, and this fluidity was consistent across both interviews and focus group interview.

Professional teacher identities, and how they interact with a personal identity also emerged in my research. This included **different types of a teacher's professional identity** presented depending on the teachers' classes, location in the school, if in contact with colleagues (in and out of the school building), or if in a position of responsibility. Thus, it was implied that professional teacher identities are performed depending on the audience and place, and that a professional teacher identity is not singular but a cluster of many identities or versions of an identity. Thus, different forms of a professional teacher identity, and different terms used to describe a 'teacher' arose in my research, such as the 'lighter', 'social' and 'other' sides to teaching. Teachers portrayed different professional teacher identities within their narratives, for example mentor vs. teacher. Teaching as a profession also had different connotations, for example service vs. vocation. Furthermore, most of the teachers thought they can 'be themselves' with higher ability students and older students that they teach. In Chapter 3, The Literature Review, I outlined that the type of identity which teachers would exhibit would be multiple in nature rather than anchored and static. This is supported by all of the of teachers in the sample. Giving Matt as an example, he spoke about the social side, the teacher in the classroom and the teacher in the corridor. Walt was able to consider his own teacher qualities in relation to his subject when discussing Walter White from *Breaking Bad*, yet was also able to use Yoda from *Star Wars* as a teacher figure who he aspired to be like. This was based on his wisdom but the idea of using a fantastical character such as Yoda, is supported by Hall and Du Gay (1996:4) who discussed identity being partly constructed through fantasy thus it would not be completely implausible to reflect on

one's own professional teacher identity in this manner. *Harry Potter* teacher images were also commented on by, not only Walt, but Anne, Martin, Mark and Jo, choosing aspects of their identities to relate to their own professional teacher identity. Thus the notion of multiple identities is apt for this particular research being highly relevant to the teachers in this sample.

What strongly emerged from my research on this sample of teachers was that teachers today are **not influenced by elite, traditional images of teachers**, therefore these images are not as strong and resilient as described by Harry Judge (1995) who describes dominant images of teachers, such as Mr Chips, as powerful in the public imagination and now placed in a pedagogical museum. This particular question could highlight the specific culture of the school, not only the individual opinions of the teachers. This will depend on how overlapping the comments are on this particular area. There are changes that have occurred to teachers, teaching and schools, hence why some viewers are shocked at the reality documentaries depicting the challenges of teaching now compared to when they were at school. Teachers therefore mentioned the differences between teachers now and in the past, but the reasons for describing this were impartial comments with no factual basis to them. The teachers were aware that changes to professional teacher identities had occurred both in media and reality, but were not clear in articulating what these changes had been. Common teacher images that were mentioned instead were Perez in *The Wire*, *Waterloo Road*, Mr White in *Breaking Bad*, and the teacher images in *Teachers*. In comparison to the teachers in the past who were portrayed as traditional and strict by most of the teachers in my research, the majority of the teachers in this research like to come across as having a relaxed approach, such as sitting on a desk rather than standing at the front of the classroom. This could be linked to the changes that may have occurred in teacher training since the interwar and post-war periods.

### **3. How do media depictions of teachers' relationships with students affect the construction of teachers' professional identity, pedagogy and practice?**

Finally, as part of my research, I also wanted to find out whether media had an influence on teachers' relationships with students as part of their professional teacher identity. This was one of the most significant findings in my research as, without exception, all the teachers in my sample discussed media representations in relation to **teacher-student relationships** while reflecting on their own teacher-student relationships. Many of the teachers also discussed how these relationships had changed and developed over time at similar stages which they identified as turning points in their professional teacher identity. Many of the teachers considered teacher-student relationships to be a very important part of their professional teacher identity; without an understanding of the importance of teacher-student relationships, it was considered that their teaching practice could be compromised. This was more evident in the teachers' individual interviews (first and second phase) in which it was just the teacher and researcher conversing, whereas in the focus group discussion, the female teachers took more of a lead in discussing the importance of teacher-student relationships. In summary, the role of teacher-student relationships in media was considered to be portrayed sympathetically with how teacher-student relationships occur in reality. Most of the teachers in this research agreed that the importance and depiction of teacher-student relationships associated with professional teacher identity are broadly accurate.

Further to this point, the rewards teachers communicated in their narratives were related to teacher-student relationships more so than results achieved for classes as a whole or salary or promotions. This was more common with established teachers in the teaching profession, such as Erin and Drew. An example of when this was not the case was with Walt and in the NQT focus group who spoke more about results and climbing up the career ladder. Teacher-student relationships were regarded highly by all the most experienced teachers and linked with their professional teacher identity. For the teachers who had left the profession, or were about to resign, there seemed to have been a battle between enjoying the aspect of teacher-student relationships to aid progression, and

meeting targets and completing unnecessary paperwork. Thus, most of the teachers in my research commented that TV programmes and films with teachers did depict the relationships between teachers and students more strongly than pedagogy and practice. In a recent reality documentary, *Are our kids Tough Enough?* (2015) it was commented that 'teaching now is child-centred'. This particular programme broadcast on BBC2 compares the UK's child-centred approach to militant learning in China which according to the programme makers embraces more elite methods. Thus, the comments that the teachers had in this research are portrayed in media today, although much like the teachers, the documentary does not explain the elite and traditional methods as ones used in the UK prior to the present day, but puts the difference in pedagogy and practice down to cultural differences. For instance, many comments are made throughout the documentary about teacher-student relationships are highlighted in this programme as an important part of teaching in the UK, implying that in countries like China it is not as central to their teaching practice. Finally, a surprising finding was that not many teachers immediately discussed their teacher training as influential to their teaching career, but considered their experience during their placements more valuable than the professional development they received at university.

### Limitations of the research

The teachers' narratives gave them an opportunity to think about what had happened in their past through personal memories, in their current professional role as teachers, the way teachers are represented in media and how their professional identity may alter in time both in real life and in media. However, this narrative was constructed in the telling, and it is also questionable how accurate these memories may have been. As the researcher who was a colleague of theirs, I may have affected the stories as I was known to them, but also in my interaction with them during the interviews, asking to give examples of points they had made or elaborating further. Thus, the teachers may have revealed or concealed themselves making the narrative process 'a shared narrative construction and reconstruction' for the teacher, and for myself as the researcher (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990:5).

During the course of my research, the sample of teachers was never completely stable; there was a continuous change in the teachers involved at different stages of the study. I could have possibly explored a way of stabilising this. However, as this is a multi-stage piece of narrative research, the teachers' lives would never be stable for a period of two years, and so my research only reflects this.

Although some correlations could emerge, the results from the individual interviews and focus group will have its limitations in terms of generalising the findings to a population, so therefore will not represent the wider population of teachers, but is representative of the demographics of these specific teachers in this particular school. I can understand how this stance could be argued otherwise as one could compare the different teachers' stories seeing how they are similar and distinctive. The study could also reflect identities of other teachers in the same or similar school, although this would be a gross generalisation. Linked to this point, some criticism of this research could be the lack of being able to categorise the teachers into specific groups following the generation of findings. However, categorising the teachers in groups would detract from the unique quality of each teacher and the stories they shared.

### Possible Future Research

There are various avenues which could be explored stemming from my research on teachers' professional identities and media.

First, research could be carried out into media influences on professional teacher identities which would include **social media and non-fictional media**. Social media in particular are part of an ever-changing and constantly developing technology which if carried out today would generate findings very different from findings in five or even ten years' time. The study would therefore be a snapshot of that moment in time, although would also be interesting if in the form of a longitudinal study documenting its evolution over several years.

Second, a study could be conducted into the impact of an **ITT** (initial teacher training) **module** or **CPD** (continued professional development) where trainee teachers or teachers are trained using



teacher images in media to impact on their professional teacher identity. The aim of this research would be to establish constructive ways of using these images of teachers in media. For example, could teachers be more informed about particular teacher images, especially those where their reaction may commonly be more emotional rather than a rational response?

Thirdly, although there is some **historical research** on British teacher images in media, I do think it would be worthwhile conducting a study which draws parallels between media images of teachers from 1940s (for example) until 2015 including how they have changed over time, with teacher images in real life. Peter Cunningham (1993) has conducted similar research but it would be interesting to observe the changes since this was conducted (post-2000s). This would pose the question of whether the fiction and reality of teacher images have overlapping features specific to those time periods.

Finally, **parents** were mentioned, although rarely, by some of the teachers in my research. However, it would be interesting to find out how much parents are influenced by the imagery of teachers in media, and how these images might affect their opinions and perceptions of teachers' professional identity.

**Performative analysis** could have also been used in my research in addition or instead of thematic analysis, especially in terms of identity construction which I have described in my methodology chapter. This still involves conversations (interviews) between the researcher and the teachers but may analyse not only what is said but how the narrative was communicated. The approach relates to the narrative as a performance of one's self interacting with the listener so can also analyse gestures and actions. This could involve videotaping the interviews, not only recording the audio. This type of approach relates well with Goffman's theories of self and identities, including identity construction.

### Concluding Comments

The experience of carrying out this research has taught me much about being a teacher in the same school as this sample of teachers. For one, outside the confines of the profession, teachers in this school are engaging with fictional images of teachers, and have done so prior to becoming a teacher

also. This has contributed to their ideas of what a professional teacher identity might look like, and evolved the type of teacher they have become, although to varying degrees. There are common examples which each teacher brought up in their discussions with me, and these may be the images in their pedagogical museum, or images currently in media at the time of this research. What was interesting were the images expected to be mentioned were not, demonstrating that fictional teacher images may have a 'use by date', and are not as resilient as may have previously been thought. Today's Mr Keating was yesterday's Mr Chips, but who may be the next generation of teachers' fictional teacher image placed on a pedestal that encompasses professional teacher identities?

Professional teacher identity in this research has been explored through the lens of the teacher demonstrating that their identity can vary for different audiences and in different spaces. Media in this research has acted as a means for teachers to explore their professional teacher identity, and this highlights broader issues about being an educator. This research has confirmed that the construction of a professional teacher identity is complex. Previous research on this specific identity can be contested as it is not as straightforward as may have been assumed; professional teacher identities encompass many versions of identity in order to 'play' this role. This can include a facilitating teacher identity as indicated by Martin, the teacher identity in the corridor mentioned by Matt, the teacher identity in the classroom which was important to Anne, or the teacher identity interacting with colleagues, superiors, or interacting with parents or students discussed by many of the teachers in the sample. My research findings contest Waller's (1932) comments as the interactions between teachers and students are conveyed as pivotal in understanding a teacher's professional identity, and also their pedagogy and practice; the performance that Waller describes between teacher and student is not as rigid as 'institutional bars' but an enabling aspect to teachers' professional identity. Thus a performance does not result in a 'professional distance' but is important for emotional proximity. Vivid examples of this were in Drew and Michelle's narratives. The 'cant or pose' which Cooley (1902) describes is not supported by my research; there may be different guises a teacher may adopt, but the role they play is not intentionally insincere but a necessity, and a natural part of their role as a

teacher. Mark's narrative exemplified this point well whereby he regarded his teaching role as a 'service' where he reflected on the students' responses to determine the teacher identity he would put forward in the classroom. This leads onto Mead's notions of the 'I' and 'me' which link appropriately with this research, as each of the teachers did demonstrate both a bound and structured self, and a fluid and creative self. However, each teacher had varying degrees of the 'I' and 'me' as well as varying degrees of narrative rehearsal, reflection and commitment to on their professional teacher identity's script. This variation was evident in the narratives from the then NQT, Walt and the most experienced teacher, Erin. There is an agreement with Goodson et al.'s work (2013) that people may manage changes in social conditions through story-telling, yet much of the research assumes that more detailed narratives indicate a more adaptable identity, but this was not necessarily accurate. Education and being an educator involves constant change in a social context offering the individual opportunities to author and narrate their own narratives and partake in social action, yet construction and reconstruction of narratives was not always evident across all teachers in this research. This was particularly noticeable with Erin's narratives. An uncertainty about their futures as teachers is, thus, a possibility.

What comes through in their discussions of reality documentaries on teaching, especially the *Educating...* series, is these teachers have not been ciphers of such programmes taking on attributes of the teachers or scenarios they commonly mentioned in their interviews, but they do engage with these programmes. This engagement stems to teachers in films also; teachers are engaged with the way teachers are portrayed in media and the extent to which they relate to these images. Thus, teachers do not ignore fictional teacher images; their engagement is apparent in interesting yet varied ways, just as the media find a place in the classroom and the wider school in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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## Appendices

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### Appendix I: Interview questions

#### **Pilot Interview Questions**

1. Do you remember any teachers in the following films, TV shows (show list/images)
2. Are there any teachers on the show/film that you would say are similar to you as a teacher? /  
Do you share any qualities with the teachers you mentioned? / (If negative) do you think that's  
given you a model of how not to teach?
3. Do you ever get ideas for lessons from TV shows, films, documentaries you have watched? /  
Do you think one might be picking up skills of performing from what we watch, read or listen  
to?
4. Do you think teachers are portrayed/represented accurately in the media including TV and  
film?
5. These shows/films rely on the performance of a role. To what extent do you feel teachers,  
yourself included, perform?
6. Which class do you perform with the most?
7. Media has evolved greatly from these examples and now also includes social media. What is  
your opinion of new waves of social media?
8. How do you think the emerging media might affect you as a teacher?
9. Do you think the emerging social media could enhance teaching?
10. Describe your favourite on-screen teacher
11. Would you say there was a difference between you out of the class compared to in the class?

### **First Phase of Interviews – the exploratory phase**

1. Can you remember your favourite teacher?
2. Can you remember your least favourite teacher?
3. Would you liken yourself to any of teachers you mentioned?
4. Describe yourself as a teacher
5. Draw a timeline to show your journey in your current profession, any way you wish - (this can include the lead up to, what has happened during, and where you see yourself in the future)
6. If you were to choose anyone to play you as a teacher in a film, who would you choose and why?

### **Second Phase of Interviews – media-focused**

*Here are some images of teachers who have been in the media. They are a selection, so if you think of any others please let me know (see images below)*

### **Fictional Teacher Representations**

1. Do you know, or have you known, any teachers who are like the following (fictional) teachers?
2. Would you liken yourself to any of these fictional teachers? (Teacher identity) – if so in what kind of ways?
3. Do you think any of your teaching techniques are similar to any of these teachers? (Teacher pedagogy and practice)
4. Do you think any of your teaching techniques are different to any of these teachers? (Teacher pedagogy and practice)

### **Teachers in Documentaries**

5. There has been an increase in reality documentaries such as Educating Essex and Educating Yorkshire. What are your opinions of these representations of teachers?
6. Would you liken yourself to any of the teachers on either of these shows? – If so in what kind of ways?
7. Are any of the methods you use in lessons similar to what you viewed on either show?

## Appendix II: Images of teachers

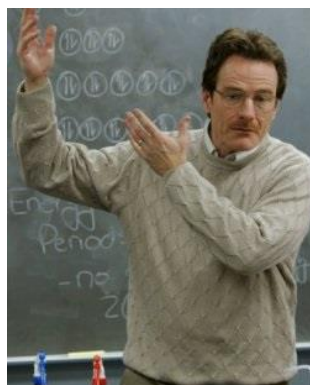
### **Ms. Halsey, *Bad Teacher* (2011)**

Elizabeth Halsey is a gold digging Chicago-area middle school teacher at the John Adams Middle School who curses at her students, drinks heavily, smokes marijuana, and only shows movies during lessons while she sleeps through class. By the end of the film, it is the start of a new school year, and Elizabeth is kinder to her co-workers, and has started a relationship. Elizabeth also has a new position in the school as the new guidance counselor caring about her students in a different capacity.



### **Walter White, *Breaking Bad* (AMC: 2008-2013)**

Walter "Walt" Hartwell White Sr., also known by his clandestine pseudonym "Heisenberg", was a chemist and a former chemistry teacher in Albuquerque, New Mexico, who, after being diagnosed with Stage 3A inoperable lung cancer, started manufacturing crystal methamphetamine to both pay for his treatments and provide for his family in the event of his passing. He is the central character of the series, and is portrayed as a protagonist, antagonist and antihero. As the series progresses, Walter gradually becomes darker and takes on a more villainous role.





### **Will Schuester, *Glee* (Fox: 2009-2015)**

William Michael "Will" Schuester is one of the main characters on *Glee*. He was in charge of the William McKinley High School Glee Club, New Directions. Will is the school's Spanish teacher until Season Three episode The Spanish Teacher, where he takes a job as a history teacher. He is married to Terri Del Monico in Season One, but they divorce after Will finds that Terri has lied to him about being pregnant. He is currently married to and living with McKinley High's guidance counselor, Emma Pillsbury. By Season Five, it is revealed that Will and Emma are expecting a child. He later returns to McKinley as the alumni consultant for New Directions, having served a very brief term as director of Vocal Adrenaline. He is now the principal of McKinley High, now designated as a performing arts school.



### **Yoda, *Star Wars* (1977- )**

Yoda is a fictional character in the *Star Wars* space opera franchise created by George Lucas. Grand Jedi Master Yoda is among the oldest and most powerful known Jedi Masters in the *Star Wars* universe.



**Jess Day, *New Girl* (Fox: 2001- )**

Jessica Day, or more commonly known as Jess, is the main character of *New Girl*. She is a bubbly young woman who just turned 31, trying to find herself after a shocking breakup with her boyfriend, whom she caught cheating. She has been a teacher since 2006 and she loves to play the handbells. Jess enjoys crafting, but doesn't have much time for it anymore. She also writes Nancy Drew fan-fiction. She needed a new place to live due to breaking up with her boyfriend, so she moved in with three men named Nick, Schmidt and Coach. In the second season, Jess is fired from her past position in the school for no particular reason. After trying some casual jobs, she started working in adult education.



**Alaric Saltzman, *The Vampire Diaries* (The CW: 2009- )**

Alaric J."Ric" Saltzman is a main character of *The Vampire Diaries*. Alaric is a human, vampire hunter, former history teacher at Mystic Falls High School and a former Enhanced Original Vampire, not by being one of the first vampires as the Mikaelson Family is, but instead being turned through an altered version of the spell used on the Mikaelson family.



**Ms Norbury, *Mean Girls* (2004)**

Ms. Sharon Norbury is the 12th grade calculus teacher at North Shore High School, portrayed by actress Tina Fey. She is also the coach of the North Shore Mathletes.



**Miss Honey, *Matilda* (1996)**

Miss Jennifer Honey is a school teacher at Crunchem Hall and later becomes the principal there. She's the daughter of Magnus Honey and the niece of Agatha Trunchbull.



**Dumbledore, *Harry Potter* (2001-2011)**

Professor Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore, was the Transfiguration Professor, and later Headmaster of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Professor Dumbledore also served as Supreme Mugwump of the International Confederation of Wizards and Chief Warlock of the Wizengamot.



**Mr Collins, *The Wonder Years* (ABC: 1988-1993)**

Mr Collins appeared in three episodes of *The Wonder Years* as Kevin Arnold's algebra teacher.



**Mr. Miyagi, *The Karate Kid* (1984)**

Mr Miyagi is a handyman and martial arts master who agrees to teach a bullied boy karate and shows him that there is more to the martial art than fighting.



**Mr Feeny, *Boy Meets World* (ABC: 1993-2000)**

George Hamilton Feeny is Cory's Matthews (main character in the series) sixth grade teacher. He is also the neighbour of the Matthews family. As the series progresses, he starts working in the John Adams High School, just when the main characters begin to attend there. Eventually, he becomes the principal, and later on a college professor at Pennbrook. From the start of the series, Mr Feeny attempts to be strictly a teacher to his students, but later develops close relationships with the main characters.



**Roland “Prez” Pryzbylewski: *The Wire* (HBO: 2000-2008)**

Pryzbylewski is a detective of Polish heritage in the Baltimore Police Department. Initially seen as incompetent, hapless, corrupt and hot-headed, he proves to function better behind the scenes as a talented code-cracker. Eventually, he leaves the Baltimore Police Department following an accidental shooting of another officer and becomes a middle school math teacher, where he develops into a caring and moral person.



**Mrs. Krabappel, *The Simpsons* (Fox: 1989- )**

Edna Krabappel was a 4th Grade teacher at Springfield Elementary School. Edna was an A-grade student back in school and held a Master's in Education from Bryn Mawr College. Her life dream once was to teach to young students; however, after years of teaching jaded her positive image, and after her husband left for another woman, their marriage counselor, Edna started drinking her days away. She got fired from teaching in a prestigious private school, and eventually made her way into Springfield Elementary. From then on, she was portrayed as a caricature of the American public school system,



**Miss Othmar, *The Charlie Brown and Snoopy Show* (CBS: 1983-1985)**

Miss Othmar is an unseen character (like all adults) in Charles M. Schulz's *Peanuts* comic strip. She is Linus van Pelt's schoolteacher. She was first mentioned in 1959, shortly after Linus was shown to be in school. In the *Peanuts* television cartoons, Miss Othmar is voiced by a trombone, as are many of the adults.



**Mr Belding, *Saved by the Bell* (NBC: 1989-1993)**

Played by Dennis Haskins, Mr. (Richard) Belding is the principal of Bayside High School and the show's resident authority figure. Belding has frequent run-ins with Zack (one of the main characters) and his friends as either a foe to be outwitted or a friend to turn to for help. Despite being a responsible authority figure, Mr. Belding is unusual in that he genuinely seems to care about what his students, particularly Zack, think of him.



### **Mr Keating, *Dead Poets Society* (1989)**

On the first day of class, the students are surprised by the unorthodox teaching methods of new English teacher John Keating, who encourages his students to "make your lives extraordinary", a sentiment he summarizes with the Latin expression *carpe diem* ("seize the day"). Subsequent lessons include standing on their desks to teach the boys how they must look at life in a different way, telling them to rip out the introduction of their poetry books which explains a mathematical formula used for rating poetry, and inviting them to make up their own style of walking in a courtyard to encourage them to be individuals.



### **Glenn Holland, *Mr Holland's Opus* (1995)**

In 1965, Glenn Holland (Richard Dreyfuss) is a professional musician and composer who has been relatively successful in the exhausting life of a musician. However, in an attempt to enjoy more free time with his young wife, Iris, and to enable him to compose a piece of orchestral music, the 30-year-old Holland accepts a high school teaching position. Unfortunately for Holland, he is soon forced to realize that his position as a music teacher makes him a marginalized figure in the faculty's hierarchy. Many of his colleagues, and some in the school's administration, including the school's principal and vice principal resent Holland and question the value and importance of music education given the school's strained budget. However, he quickly begins to win many of his colleagues over. In the classroom, Holland finds success utilizing rock and roll as a way to make classical music more accessible to his students. Reluctantly, he starts to see his students as individuals and begins finding ways to help them excel.





### **Professor McGonagall, Harry Potter (2001-2011)**

Madam Professor Minerva McGonagall) was a witch and a registered Animagus who attended Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry from 1947 to 1954 and was sorted into Gryffindor House. After her education, she worked for two years at the Ministry of Magic and later returned to Hogwarts, where she became Head of Gryffindor House, Transfiguration professor and concurrently, at differing times, Deputy Headmistress and Headmistress of Hogwarts.



### **Mr Chips, *Goodbye Mr Chips* (1939)**

When 25-year-old Charles Edward Chipping first arrives as a Latin teacher to Brookfield Public School in 1870, he becomes a target of many practical jokes. He reacts by imposing strict discipline in his classroom, making him respected, but disliked. Time passes and his relationship with his pupils improves and eventually he becomes the senior master. At the end of one year, he is disappointed in not receiving an appointment as the house master within the school for the following year. During his short marriage, his wife brings Mr Chips out of his shell and shows him how to be a better teacher. Chips becomes a much-loved school institution, developing a rapport with generations of pupils. He is later pressured to retire by a more "modern" headmaster, but the students do not support this. Chips finally retires in 1914 at age 69, but is summoned back to serve as interim headmaster because of the shortage of teachers resulting from the First World War. He retires permanently in 1918.





### **Hector, *The History Boys* (2006)**

The General Studies teacher, known by staff and boys alike by his nickname "Hector" (Richard Griffiths), is the students' favourite teacher, and works alongside their deputy head and regular History teacher, Mrs Lintott. At the conclusion of each class, Hector offers a lift to one of the students on his motorbike and it is generally known (and dismissed as a joke) that he touches them inappropriately on the ride. Hector's indiscretions are eventually revealed and Felix instructs him to "retire early". The Headmaster is later forced to reinstate Hector.



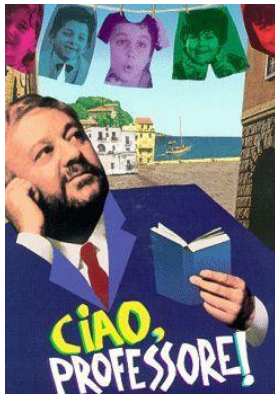
### **Erin Gruwell, *Freedom Writers* (2007)**

Erin Gruwell is an enthusiastic young teacher whose enthusiasm is challenged when she finds her class is composed of "at-risk" students, the "untouchables," and not the eager-for-college students she expected. Her students self-segregate into racial groups within the classroom. This is problematic, as gang fights break out and, consequently, most of her students stop attending class. Not only is Gruwell challenged with gaining her students' trust on personal and academic levels, but she must do so with very little support from her professional peers and district higher-ups. At school, Gruwell intercepts a racist drawing by one of her high school students and utilizes it to teach them about the Holocaust. She gradually begins to earn their trust and buys them composition books to record their diaries, in which they talk about their experiences of being abused, seeing their friends die, and being evicted. Determined to reform her high school students, Gruwell takes on two part-time jobs to pay for more books and spends a lot more time at school, much to the disappointment of her husband. Her students start to behave with respect and discover a lot more. Gruwell asks her students to write their diaries in book form. She compiles the entries and names it *The Freedom Writers Diary*. The film ends with a note that Gruwell successfully prepared numerous high school students to graduate high school and attend college, for many the first in their families to do so.



**Marco Sperelli, *Ciao, Professore!* (1992)**

Marco Tullio Sperelli is a professor of Italian language for children from the region of Liguria in northern Italy. Due to a failure of the Ministry of Education, he is transferred not to another northern town, but instead a similar-sounding town near Naples, in southern Italy. There he finds a school where the students, teachers and parents deal with the poverty of the south in a resigned and practical manner that he feels are unworthy of the morality, ethics and education children should learn. (For example, most of the children avoid school because they must work for a living to help support their families).



**Henry Barthes, *Detachment* (2012)**

Henry Barthes is a substitute teacher at a high school. Barthes' method of imparting vital knowledge to his temporary students is interrupted by the arrival of three women in his life — the damaged and naive prostitute Erica, a fellow teacher, and a troubled teen named Meredith. These women all have profound effects on Barthes' life, forcing him to both re-discover aspects of his own personality, and to come to terms with both the tragic suicide of his mother and the impending death of his grandfather.



**Lauren, *The Catherine Tate Show* (BBC: 2004-2007) - Language Lesson (Original broadcast: 23rd November 2006.)**

Lauren Cooper is a comprehensive school student with a bad attitude who is most widely known for her phrase "Am I bovvered?". Lauren, her best friend Liese Jackson and her love interest Ryan Perkins are known as jobs. Sketches throughout series one see Lauren arguing with authority figures such as train conductors and teachers, as well as Liese and Ryan. Her behaviour in later series becomes increasingly worse and engages in confrontation more frequently. In this particular scene, the teacher is persevering with teaching the class French despite Lauren's disruption. She finally caves in exclaiming: 'Right, Lauren, that's enough. I'm not going to stand here and listen to this kind of xenophobic abuse from a stupid girl who is too ignorant to even learn the language, let alone understand the people. I will fail you for this test, which means you will get an F for the entire module' to which Lauren responds with: 'Suis je bovvered? Regardez mon Est-ce que mon visage est bovvered?'



***Teachers* (Channel 4: 2001-2004)**

The first three series are set in the fictional Summerdown Comprehensive, which merges with another school in the fourth series to form Watkins School. *Teachers* had certain themes that it maintained through every episode. These included: Appearances of animals, particularly donkeys, in unusual places. Others seen include lions, penguins and sheep. In all such appearances, the teachers and students are completely oblivious to these animals; a staffroom scene early in the episode, usually with an announcement by Clare to set up one of the plots or premises of the episode; the name of the day written in a variety of ways in the scenery, a prop or a bodily adornment; smoking is a very prominent feature in every episode. A lot of the scenes in all episodes, primarily through the first three series, feature members of the cast smoking as they banter; the pub is the setting where nearly every episode of *Teachers* starts, usually with the teachers having immaturely themed conversations.



***Waterloo Road*, (BBC: 2006-2015)**

*Waterloo Road* is a British television drama series set in a comprehensive school of the same name. A common theme throughout Series One was the threat of the school's closure by the governors owing to falling pupil numbers, bad pupil behaviour, and the bad publicity it had been receiving prior to Jack's appointment as headmaster. Other storylines included the arrival and departure of prospective sponsor governors, drug-dealing, the alcoholism of a trainee teacher, the perversion of the canteen assistant, bullying, the return of a former pupil, and the arrival of a new sixth former who starts an affair with the new school. Other notable storylines involved a trainee teacher who was accused of having a sexual relationship with a pupil and was then forced to date the pupil's father, teachers being accused of assault, the deportation of a pupil, and a plagiarism scam which catches the exam board's attention, the introduction of a separate sex classes policy, which was very unpopular with the new Head of Pastoral Care, homosexuality reveals, the school being under inspection, following a student being allowed entry to the school after their release from a Youth Detention Centre.





### **Grange Hill (BBC: 1978-2015)**

The drama was centred on the fictional comprehensive school of Grange Hill in the (equally fictitious) borough of North London called 'Northam', and follows the lives of the students as they progress through school. From the start, the series caused controversy for its real-life, gritty portrayal of school life, which differed from the idealised portrayals of earlier school dramas. **Mr Starling** appeared only once during Series One, and his initial, E., was shown underneath the name of the school in the first episode: the authority figure most regularly seen during this time was the Head of First Year, **Mrs Monroe** (Dorothea Philips). **Mr Llewellyn** did not appear on screen during the 1980 series: the day-to-day running of the school was left to the highly competent but much put-upon deputy head **Mr Keating** (Robert Hartley), who was also deputy head under **Mrs McClusky** until 1984. The most senior authority figure was **Mr Robson** who at this point was deputy head. Mrs McClusky was demoted to deputy head temporarily in 1985 having had to reapply, unsuccessfully, for her post following the merger of Grange Hill with Brookdale and Rodney Bennett. Strict disciplinarian **Mr Bronson** was a former Latin teacher who arrived when Grange Hill merged with another school. It wasn't long before his shout of 'You Boy!' became legendary. When the new head, Mr Humphries, was killed in a road accident the following year, Mrs McClusky was again acting head and her permanent headship was later confirmed. The final headmistress of Grange Hill was **Miss Gayle**, introduced as deputy head in the 2007 series although she did not appear in Series 31.

<b>Mr Starling</b> 	<b>Mr Robson</b> 	<b>Mrs Monroe</b> 	<b>Mrs McClusky</b> 
<b>Mr Keating</b> 	<b>Mr Llewellyn</b> 	<b>Mr Bronson</b> 	<b>Miss Gayle</b> 

### ***Educating Essex* (Channel 4: 2001)**

*Educating Essex* is a British documentary television programme using a fly on the wall format to show the everyday lives of the staff and students of Passmore's Academy, a secondary school in Harlow, Essex, interspersed with interviews of those involved and featuring narration from the director and interviewer, David Clews. The series received mixed media coverage: it was largely praised for its insight into the lives and behaviour of teenagers and the education system, but was also criticised for its depiction of students and teachers using profanity, as well as bullying and teenage pregnancy. The series covers a wide range of heavy themes, including a false accusation of assault against teacher Mr Drew by Camelita in the first episode, a case of bullying which moves on to cyberbullying against Gabby in the second, Vinni being taken into foster care in episode three and episode four focusing on Sky's teenage pregnancy by Liam. Episode five concentrated on the power of gossip and rumours, as Carrie's and Ashleigh's friendship breaks up and they reconcile. The sixth episode returns to Mr Drew as he attempts to get Mollie and her sister Charlotte back on the right academic track. The final episode features Ryan, a new arrival at the school, who has Asperger syndrome.



### ***Educating Yorkshire (Channel 4: 2013)***

*Educating Yorkshire* is a British documentary television programme. It follows the everyday lives of the staff and students of Thornhill Community Academy, a secondary school in Dewsbury, West Yorkshire. Newly appointed headteacher Mr Mitchell opens the school to a hopeful new year. This episode focuses on a variety of students, including Ryan, an enthusiastic Year 8 who hopes to become Prime Minister, or, failing that, an actor, fireman, or policeman. One of the most memorable stories in this series, according to the teachers in this sample focused on the English teacher Mr. Burton who deals with his most challenging class, including Musharaf, a kind but shy student with an acute stutter, trying to get a C in English. During the time revising for his English speaking GCSE, Mr Burton finds an unusual yet extremely effective way of making Musharaf have a less obvious stutter. Mr. Mitchell informs him that he has earned the privilege of being a prefect, which delights him. As it is the end of the year for Year 11s, all is tearful as Mr. Mitchell and the staff give an assembly, inviting Musharaf to the front to give a speech. At the end of the episode, it is revealed that Musharaf got a C in English, which prompts him to hugely thank Mr. Burton.



### ***Tough Young Teachers (BBC: 2014)***

*Tough Young Teachers* is a British documentary television series. The six graduate teachers featured in the series are Charles Wallendahl (University of Oxford), Chloe Shaw (Royal Holloway, University of London), Claudenia Williams (University of Birmingham), Meryl Noronha (King's College London), Nicholas Church (Imperial College London) and Oliver Beach (University of Birmingham & Cornell University). The six graduates are assigned to challenging schools within London by the educational charity Teach First. The programme tracks the difficulties that they face and the progress that they make in their first year of teaching.



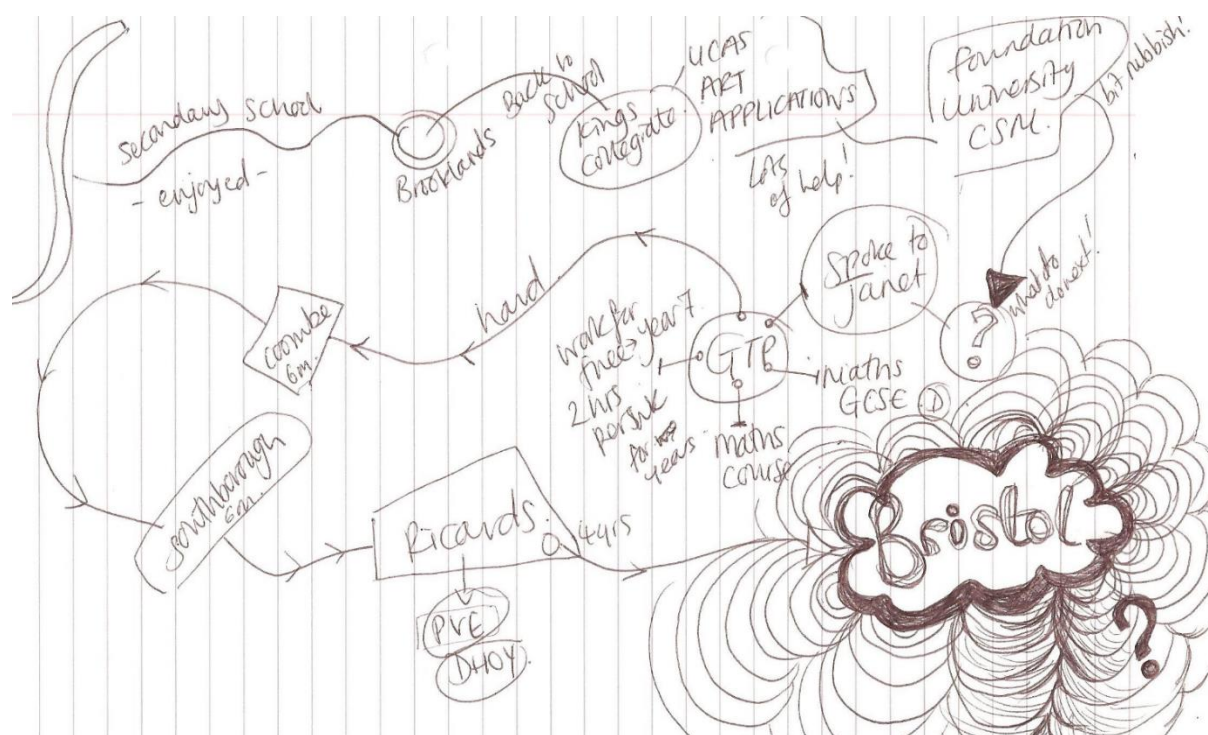
### Appendix III: Focus Group Schedule

***What are your thoughts about the findings below; how might you respond to the questions?***

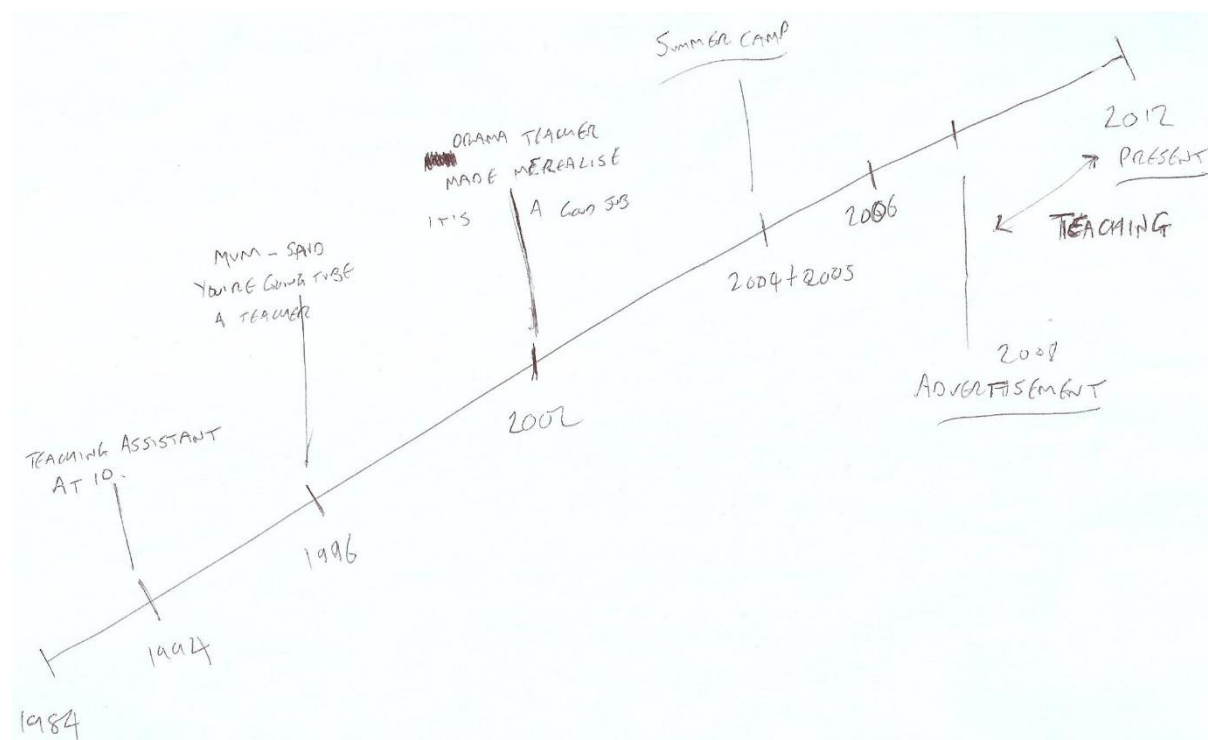
<b>My findings</b>	<b>My Question to you...</b>
When watching teachers in popular media, teachers will automatically reflect on their own professional identity	<b>Can teachers in popular media influence teachers to reflect on their own professional identity?</b>
Teachers today are not influenced by elite or traditional educators, therefore these images are not as strong and resilient as described by Harry Judge (1995) [describes dominant images of teachers as powerful in the public imagination and now placed in a pedagogical museum]	<b>Why are traditional and elite educators not as powerful and influential as they may have been e.g. Mr Chips?</b>
Teachers in films and on TV are caricatures of real teachers, and cannot be taken seriously	<b>How can teachers be portrayed in realistic manner?</b>
Some teachers in films and on TV can be inspiring and something to work towards	<b>How can teachers in popular media inspire future teachers?</b>
Most teachers get frustrated watching reality documentaries about teachers	<b>Why do teachers have strong feelings about reality documentaries about teaching?</b>
Teachers get bad press so TV and film are the only means of demonstrating how hard teachers work	<b>Can popular media be used as a medium to demonstrate the reality about teaching?</b>
TV programmes and films with teachers are not thinking about teachers as an audience, and therefore are not made to inform but entertain	<b>What are the intentions of programme makers when producing programmes about teachers and teaching?</b>
TV programmes and films with teachers depict the relationships between teachers and students more strongly than pedagogy and practice	<b>Why are teacher-student relationships been depicted more frequently in popular media?</b>
Not many teachers immediately choose their teacher training as influential to their teaching career	<b>How important is teacher training? Would it be beneficial to incorporate popular media into teacher training?</b>



## Appendix IV: Timeline examples



Joanne's Timeline



Ben's Timeline